

A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES MYSTERY

THE ADVENTURE OF THE BERYL ANARCHISTS



CRAIG STEPHEN COPLAND

The Adventure of the Beryl Anarchists

A New Sherlock Holmes Mystery



By

Craig Stephen Copland

Copyright 2015 by Craig Stephen Copland
Published by Craig Stephen Copland at Amazon

You are invited to join the New Sherlock Holmes Mysteries mailing list and receive Irregular announcements about the release of new titles, special promotions, and Sherlockian news. Click on www.SherlockHolmesMystery.com and sign up.

Dedication

To those men and women who courageously fought for their countries, believing in their hearts that the cause for which they were fighting and dying was right and good ... and who were not honored.



Table of Contents

[Chapter One](#) - Only Mad Dogs and Englishmen

[Chapter Two](#) - Not Safe

[Chapter Three](#) - How Very Noble

[Chapter Four](#) - Pulling My Leg

[Chapter Five](#) - Norton Rules

[Chapter Six](#) - Run For Your Life

[Chapter Seven](#) - An Everyday Burglary in Southwark

[Chapter Eight](#) - The Northumberland Fusiliers

[Chapter Nine](#) - Ride a Cock Horse

[Chapter Ten](#) - A Bat Out of Hell

[Chapter Eleven](#) - Let the Fire Take Me

[Historical and Other Notes](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Other New Sherlock Holmes Mysteries by Craig Stephen](#)

[Copland](#)

[Copyright](#)

Note to readers: A *beryl* is a type of gemstone. The green beryl is better known today as an emerald.

You are invited to join the New Sherlock Holmes Mysteries mailing list and receive Irregular announcements about the release of new titles, special promotions, and Sherlockian news. Click on the link below and submit your email address. Privacy is promised.

www.SherlockHolmesMystery.com

Chapter One

Only Mad Dogs and Englishmen



“Holmes,” said I as I stood one morning in our bow-window looking into the street, “here is a chap not long for this world if he keeps marching along Baker Street in this heat. He will have a stroke before passing our door if he does not slow down.”

My friend rose lazily from his armchair and stood with his hands in the pockets of his dressing-gown, looking over my shoulder. It was yet another blistering afternoon in the dog days of early August. The summer of 1912 was one of the hottest on record. For four weeks we had suffered temperatures in excess of eighty degrees, and all of England had gone without a drop of rain. Sensible people stayed indoors with the shades drawn, and turned on their recently acquired mechanical fans. No one marched down the street dressed in full business attire unless they were deranged, or desperate.

The eccentric fellow that had caught my attention did not appear to be an escapee from Bed’lam. He was dressed in a somber yet rich style, a black frock-coat, neat brown gaiters, and well-cut pearl-grey trousers. Yet his actions were in absurd contrast to the dignity of his dress and features, for he was running hard, with occasional little springs, such as a weary man gives who is little accustomed to set any tax upon his legs. As he ran, he held his hat in one hand and a large handkerchief in the other, which he used to wipe the sweat off his face and the back of his neck.

“So what do you think, Holmes? He is not, I will wager, a retired sergeant of Marines,” I said, making reference to one of my earliest conversations with Holmes, now nearly a quarter century in the past. “He looks more like a banker to me, and not a very happy one.”

“An excellent observation, my friend,” replied Holmes. “It is good to see that in twenty-five years your powers of observation are showing some signs of improvement. Given the quality and cut of his clothing, I would agree that he is most likely a banker, and a highly successful one. He is on foot so he must have mixed with the great unwashed and taken the Underground rather than a cab, a sign of pressing urgency. He is of the same vintage as you and me, having seen his fiftieth birthday pass several years ago, but at least two stone heavier than you and three more than I. He has been living well, or, at least, he was up until this morning, when disaster overtook him, and he is now on his way to our door to seek my assistance.”

“Holmes,” I remonstrated. “You are becoming more obsessed with yourself with every passing year. A fiver says he walks on by and into the pub on the corner for a clandestine meeting with an accomplice.”

“You are on.”

You would think that after twenty-five years I might have learned not to make foolish bets.

Less than a minute later the banker crossed over Baker Street, walked directly to our door and rang loudly and repeatedly on the bell.

I listened as our young page, Billy, scampered to the door, and then nimbly hopped up the stairs.

“Mr. Alexander Holder,” he announced, and handed the calling card to Holmes. Then I heard another set of steps. The first ten were quick and heavy. Then they stopped for several seconds. The last seven were slow and labored. Into our doorway came a large man, his rich and impeccable attire completely disheveled and soaked with sweat. His face

was florid, his breathing all desperate huffs and puffs. He turned his body toward the door frame and leaned against it, supporting himself for fear of fainting. I jumped up out of my chair and grasped him by the elbow and upper arm.

“Please sir,” I said, “Come sit down. Please, remove your suit coat. You must let your body cool down.”

He let me help him out of his jacket and then dropped heavily onto the sofa. Holmes had stood up and turned our mechanical fan so that it was blowing a strong stream of air directly on to him. While I sat beside the fellow, Holmes quickly stepped into our kitchen and returned forthwith bearing a large glass of water into which he had added several pieces of ice from the icebox. He gave it to our visitor, who nodded and slowly drank it whilst rocking his body back and forth. His eyes were closed. His face was awash with rivulets of sweat, mingled with tears. During my years of observing clients of Sherlock Holmes enter the front room of 221B Baker Street, I had never seen a man so utterly distraught.

Holmes excused himself again and, this time, returned with a small towel that he had soaked in water and wrapped around a handful of ice cubes. I took it from him and applied it to the man’s forehead and scalp and back of the neck. He sat like an immovable statue for a while before taking the towel from my hand and continuing to hold against his face and head.

Five full minutes after entering our room he lifted his head, opened his eyes, and spoke to us.

“Thank you, gentlemen. You are being most kind. I would have been almost happy to have died of heat stroke. At least, it would not have been the coward’s way out of taking my own life. I came close to doing that before coming here.”

“We are here to be of assistance,” said Holmes. “I offer no guarantees, but I can assure you that many men have sat where you are now sitting, having had similar thoughts before coming here. All of them are still alive and most are

reasonably happy. So please compose yourself and explain as succinctly as possible what has so grievously befallen you."

The man closed his eyes again and took a slow deep breath. "My name, as you know is Alexander Holder. You most likely know who I am."

"I do," said Holmes. "Your private bank is one of the most respected and successful firms in London, and your clientele restricted to the upper crust of the upper crust; the biggest, noblest, most exalted names in England. You are a very admired and trusted man, sir, a man whose character has never borne a stain. Your arrival at this address tells me that your life has been crushed."

"Aye, sir. It has. Yesterday at this time I thought of myself as one of the most fortunate men on the face of God's good earth. Three hours ago I was holding a revolver against my temple and ready to blow out my brains."

"That," said Holmes, "is now in the past. Please sir, your story."

"Together with my partner, Redvers Stevenson, I own and manage our private banking establishment. Over the past twenty years, through diligent management and scrupulous practices, we have become trusted by many of the wealthiest citizens in England, not only to safeguard their funds but to manage all aspects of their financial affairs. No new client even bothers to make an appointment unless he, or sometimes she, has at least fifty thousand pounds to entrust to our care.

"My partner looks after our primary office on Threadneedle Street, just a few doors east of the Old Lady herself. Our secondary office, the Mayfair-Belgravia branch, which we call the May-Bel office, is on Knightsbridge Road, and provides services exclusively for the wealthy and renowned of the bluest of the bluebloods, and the elite of the leaders in the church, the military, the universities, and

the world of commerce. All told, we have been entrusted with the care of several hundred million pounds.”

“Have you been robbed?” asked Holmes.

“Worse. Much worse.”

I could not imagine that a bank that held that much money could be robbed, or if it could, then what could possibly be worse, but my knowledge of the world of commerce was painfully lacking.

“Swindled? Defrauded?” continued Holmes. “Surely you are insured. Lloyds must collect an enormous monthly premium from you.”

“If only it were that simple, sir, I would not be here.”

“Then please, sir, I am all attention.”

“As a detective, Mr. Holmes, you are aware that a man can, if he so chooses lie convincingly to his wife, or to his closest friends in his club, or to the police, or even to a judge and jury. But he cannot lie to his bank book.”

“Entirely correct.”

“A bank’s records must, of necessity, show the origin of funds transferred in and those transferred out. All of our clients expect that these records will be kept confidential, although for the great majority of our clients there would be no more than an annoying invasion of their privacy if all of their transactions were to be made public. They are entirely above board and of unquestioned integrity. However, there are some of our clients, about fifty of them, that being no more than one percent of the list, for whom the records must, at all costs, remain secret. In their files are records of payments made by professors to students, and students to professors; by bishops to young women, and young men; by noblemen to married and unmarried women, as well as to young bachelors; by foreign governments, many of which are not on friendly terms with Great Britain, to esteemed men in government and in the military; to directors and titans of industry by their competitors. The list goes on sir. I leave it to your imagination to add to it.

“The contents of these files are so sensitive that I have never kept them at the bank itself. They have, for the past two decades, been kept in my home in Belgravia. I have protected them with the most advanced locks on my doors and windows, and in the strongest of safes equipped with the most recent combination locks.”

“Ah,” said Holmes, “and these files were stolen. Is that why you are here?” He was attempting to restrain his instinctive action of rubbing his hands together in barely disguised glee.

“Exactly sir. I had added a few notes to the files yesterday. When I opened the safe this morning, they were all gone.”

“And did you inform the police? What did the boys over at Scotland Yard have to say?”

“They said that they would try to have someone come around in a couple of days. But as there was no cash or securities or gems taken, and as no one had been assaulted, they could not give it a high priority. They explained that they had no choice but to concern themselves with murders, and assaults, and real robberies where more than pieces of paper were removed. They could not understand that I was ruined.”

“Forgive me, but I do not either. No funds were removed. Surely you have other records confirming the bank balances of these clients. These were not put at risk. Should the information in the files be made public, some people, who deserve nothing better, would be shamed. Wherein is the disaster?”

“The world of confidential private banking,” replied the banker, “operates not only on the expectation of a good return on investment, but on the assurance of complete privacy and trust. We are relied upon to be discreet and to refrain from all gossip upon the affairs of our clients. If it became known that I could not be trusted with the secrets of even one percent of my clients, then the other ninety-nine

percent would withdraw their funds and find some other bank to whom they could be entrusted. Within a fortnight, our coffers would be emptied. My income and that of my partner would vanish. I would pass the remainder of my life as a pauper, with nothing to pass on to my children.”

“Which for you,” acknowledged Holmes, “would be an unspeakable tragedy. But wherein is the crime? There is no law that requires investors to leave their funds in the care of a banker whose security has failed. Common sense would tell them to find a replacement as soon as possible. Their funds have not been damaged, only their reputations.”

Mr. Holder dropped his head onto his chest and sighed. “You are correct, sir. I would reap only my own inevitable misfortune. But what cannot be ignored is the opportunity it would present for unscrupulous people to engage in blackmail and extortion on a monumental scale. Millions of pounds would have to be paid to avoid the destruction of many marriages, the disinheriting of children, charges of breach of trust, and trials for high treason. All hell is about to break loose. The thieves will have a field day. It is not just about my life having been destroyed, it is about an enormous wave of crime that is about to sweep the country. The repercussions will continue for years. I will be a pariah until I die. Can you understand why I was prepared to blow my brains out?”

“Of course, but that possible course of action has passed and you did not follow it, so I have no more interest in hearing about it. Now I have to focus my thoughts on a crime that has taken place, and the preventing of ones that are, as you rightly suggest, about to happen. So kindly accommodate my questions with regards to those matters.”

The distressed banker looked at Holmes in disbelief. A few minutes ago Holmes had been gently attending to the man’s needs with cold water and ice. Now he had transformed himself into a heartless calculating machine. I reached over and placed my hand on the poor fellow’s forearm. “Please,

sir. If he seems insensitive, it is only because his mind is already at work on your case. Just try to answer his questions."

The man nodded and looked back at Holmes.

"When did you discover the theft?" queried Holmes.

"This morning, at half-past eight o'clock. I opened my safe just before leaving for the bank."

"And then what did you do?"

"I was struck with terror and panic. I immediately made a search throughout my office and my house."

"Ah yes, a normal but stupid action when in panic. Fifty files do not up and move themselves from the office to the loo or elsewhere. Then what?"

"I hailed a cab and went straightaway to Scotland Yard."

"Where, after learning that only files were stolen, they made you wait for over an hour to speak to an inspector."

"Yes, sir. It was closer to two hours."

"And then," asked Holmes, "with whom did you finally get to speak? Gregson? Anderson? Lestrade?"

"Inspector Lestrade."

"Who has been in that job so long that now he will not deign to soil his hands with anything less than a multiple murder, and never east of Aldgate. I assume he told you that you could just wait for several days or else you could knock on my door."

"He did exactly that. He gave me this note."

From his trousers, Mr. Holder withdrew a crumpled note, made worse by soaking inside a sweaty pocket. I took it from him. It read:

S. Holmes. "Detective"
221B Baker St. Near tube station.
Recommended for chasing lost flies.

"I assumed that he meant *lost files*," said the banker.

Holmes smiled. "I would be inclined to doubt that. But no matter. Did anyone else enter your office?"

"No. I locked the door as I departed and told the maid on no uncertain terms not to enter."

"Excellent. Then even though it is still beastly hot outside, we must make our way over to your home immediately, while any possible evidence is still fresh. I suggest that you loosen your collar, sir, and carry your suit jacket over your arm. Forgive me if I work in my shirtsleeves. My good doctor, are you available to accompany us?"

Holmes and I both excused ourselves for a few minutes to dress in as light attire as we could find and still look respectable, and followed our client slowly down the stairs. I hailed a cab and we made our way to Belgravia.

Chapter Two

Not Safe



The Holder home was an elegant three-story row house on a Mews in one of the poshest neighborhoods in London. Immediately after entering, Holmes asked Alexander Holder to take us to his office and unlock the door. The office was spacious, with a high ceiling and walls either lined with books or covered with paintings. The only windows were high on the walls and were long narrow rectangles, no more than six inches wide but nearly three feet in length. Holmes requested that we wait in the hallway while he inspected the room. He dropped to his knees, pulled out his powerful glass from his pocket and examined the carpet between the door and the large safe that sat in the corner of the room, and then the safe itself. He bade us enter and gestured to us to be seated around the small conference table.

"Do you lock the doors and windows of your home?" he asked.

"Without fail. They are never left unlocked."

"Who has keys to the house and to this room?"

"Only the maid and my man-servant. Both have been with me for over a decade. Their honesty and loyalty have been beyond question. And the members of my family."

"Were the windows and the door to this office locked when you retired last evening?"

"Most certainly. I personally locked the office door and checked the doors. I do so out of habit every evening before retiring," replied the beleaguered banker.

"The safe is open," he said. "I assume that you left it in that condition this morning."

"I did."

“Who, Mr. Holder, other than you, knew the combination to the safe?”

“My partner, Redvers Stevenson,” he said. Then for several seconds he paused. He hung his head and quietly added, “And my two sons.”

“Indeed. Then more questions are necessary,” said Holmes. “Please tell me about your sons,” said Holmes.

The banker, now seated, folded his arms across his chest, sloped his body toward the window, and spoke to his gaitered shoes. “I have two sons ... twins ... Arthur and Eric. They are no longer boys. They are now thirty-two years old. Their mother died when they were thirteen. It hit them very hard, as it did all of us. I could not bear to see them sad and I made up for it, foolishly perhaps, by granting their every wish. I spoiled them. But they were reasonably bright boys and loved their adventures. They could have attended Cambridge, but it was not to their liking and both enrolled in Sandhurst. I was proud of them although I did not let on. I had served in the BEF and thought that a few years in the military was a splendid opportunity for any young Englishman. They did rather well and upon graduation joined the Northumberland Fusiliers, expecting all the glamor and adulation that goes with being an officer. They had a bit of a brutal wake-up call when they were shipped off to South Africa to fight the Boers. They engaged in some direct combat, and both received a few ribbons and honors, but then Lord Roberts departed and Kitchener arrived. They saw no more fighting. All they did until the end of the war was guard the concentration camps.

“When my boys left England they were puffy-faced callow college lads. When they returned, they were hardened men. In my day, British soldiers came back as heroes. Men slapped their backs and bought them drinks. Ladies fussed over them and girls flirted. That did not happen for my boys. Before the war had ended that woman, Mrs. Emily Hobhouse, had reported on the horrible things that our soldiers had

done to the women and children of the Boers. Over twenty-five thousand of them died in the camps – the camps that my boys were standing guard over. When Art and Eric got back to England, they walked out to the pub on the first night home, proudly wearing their uniforms. No man bought them a round. No girls flirted with them. One of the ladies spat on them and called them monsters and bade them leave and go to hell. You have read the reports, Mr. Holmes. You know what our lads had to face. They had their white plumes with red tips, and badges proclaiming *Quo fata vocant*, but they had no pride. They and many of their comrades became outcasts, scapegoats who risked their lives to serve the Empire and then had to pay for the evils of their leaders. It did not take long before they fell in with other veterans of that war. First they just met to play sports and sit around in the pub. Beginning about five years ago they discovered motorcycles. Now that is all they live for.”

As a veteran myself, indeed having served in the same regiment, I knew these things to be true. I did not “have a good war” and came home with naught but misfortune and disaster; my health ruined. I was about to acknowledge my concern and my shared military service when I detected Holmes’s raised index finger telling me to hold my tongue.

“Why,” queried Holmes, “did you not give them positions in your bank? What with Sandhurst and the battlefield behind them they should be quite capable chaps.”

“Oh, I did. On paper they have positions. Good ones. But it has been no use. They have been to me a grievous disappointment. They only show up to work when there is nothing else to do. If there is a motorcycle rally or a race they are truant. If they do happen to be present and a client asks for advice on investing, all they can do is recommend Triumph or Norton. They cannot be bothered reading the latest on stock and bonds. Their heads are lost in plans for their club meetings, or outings, or parties. They draw a salary, but it is all a pretense. As employees, they are

useless. Their loyalty now is solely to their club, the Beryl Bikers they call themselves, and to their fellow members.”

“And any loyalty to their father has vanished?” asked Holmes. “Have you reached that conclusion?”

“What is the alternative?” replied the dejected client. “Whatever I have tried to do for them; whatever money I have given them, obviously has not been enough. No one else could possibly have entered my office and opened the safe. I have been betrayed by my own flesh and blood.” At this point, he rested his elbows on his knees and buried his face into his hands and began to sob. His entire large body heaved with each cry.

Holmes said nothing for a minute and then, ignoring our client’s distraught state, spoke. “Sir, I need to carry out an inspection of your premises. You will have to get up and out of your chair and wait for me in your parlor. But before you do so might I ask you to give me your wallet?”

Mr. Holder raised his head and looked at Holmes, his bloodshot eyes wide with question. He said nothing but stood and reached into his pocket and extracted his wallet. Holmes took it from him, and then rose, walked over to the safe, placed the wallet inside, closed the door and spun the dial. “Thank you, sir,” said he. “That has been quite helpful, now could you please wait for me in your front room and please, lock this office door behind us as we leave.”

Again, a puzzled look, but the man meekly obeyed. He and I moved to the front of the house. Holmes moved past us and opened the front door, leading out onto the gray pavement. “And kindly lock this door behind me. I shall return in no more than thirty minutes. Thank you.”

The shades in the parlor were still drawn to reduce the merciless heat of the sun, but the room was sufficiently light and comfortable. I sat on a sofa, picked up a magazine that was lying on the coffee table, and pretended to read an article. Mr. Holder paced back and forth, from time to time looking at his watch to see if thirty minutes had passed.

When that time neared, he left the room and stood by the front door, waiting for Holmes to return. At the twenty-eight minute mark, he opened the door and looked out onto the street.

A voice came from the hall behind him. "I am afraid that you will not find me out there, sir," said Holmes as he entered from the hallway that led back to the office. Mr. Holder turned and looked at Holmes in absolute shock. It would have been rude of me to laugh out loud, as I could have predicted Holmes's grand entrance and our client's reaction, so I sat and continued to read without rising from my place, as Holmes breezed past our speechless client and dropped into a chair across from me.

"Please sir, do be seated. Oh, by the way, here is your wallet." He placed the item on the coffee table and sat back, all expression deliberately wiped off his face as if nothing whatsoever of note had just occurred.

Our client said nothing, glaring at Holmes. "Mr. Holmes," he said after his speechless pause. "Please explain what you just did."

"Oh really sir, it was nothing to make into a matter of importance. I did no more than what could have been done by perhaps five other men in the current criminal class of London. I suppose we could add another hundred or so if we included the locksmiths, but they are required to be bonded and do not generally stoop to thievery, bad for business, you know. I merely walked around to the back of your house and climbed the tree in your back yard. Of course, it took me longer than it would have when I was twenty-five years of age instead of fifty-seven. But from the tree, I stepped onto the balcony of a room on the third floor. The lock on the window was undone in a trice. I descended by way of the servants' back staircase and entered your office. The safe was a bit of a sticky wicket, I have to hand you that one. I thought I could have it opened in five minutes, and my colleague, Dr. Watson, will no doubt chastise me for getting

a little too cocksure, since it took me much longer to decipher the combination, and then I walked back to greet you. All rather elementary, would your not agree, doctor?"

"Quite so," I nodded in feigned nonchalance. "Yes, quite elementary, I must say."

Holmes now turned to our client. "You will please forgive my little exercise in drama, but it was necessary that I irrefutably disabuse you of your excessively premature conclusion about your sons. Demonstrating how easy it was to remove the contents of your safe does not, I will concede, prove that either one or both of your sons did not betray you. It does, however, indicate that the list of possible suspects must be enlarged to include all those who knew the contents of your safe, not merely the combination."

The big banker slowly nodded his head. "I suppose I should be grateful that you have relieved me of that portion of my personal disaster, and must withdraw my hasty accusation of my sons. However, I do not feel any better overall knowing how easy it was to burglar my safe – the ones in the bank are made by the same firm – and that there is now a longer list of those who must, of necessity, be suspect."

"It is," replied Holmes, "entirely reasonable that you should feel much worse than you did before. But, quite frankly sir, we do not have time to dwell on your feelings. The calumnious information has already had several hours to be at work. Time is not on your side, and we must move with all possible alacrity. You will excuse me if my comments and questions are hurried and brusque from this time on."

Holder sighed. "You are excused. Lay on Macduff."

"Very good, sir. Permit me to return to your sons. Are they as close in their temperaments and in their bond with each other as they are in appearance?"

"They are not at all similar in their appearance. They are fraternal twins, not identical. The younger, Arthur, has a fair complexion, blue eyes, and blond hair. His body is tall and

lithe, nearly devoid of body hair, and with long limbs and fingers. His brother, Eric, is a small bear. Shorter than his brother by half a head but built like a brick privy. His eyes are dark, his hair black and curly, and he sports a beard that begins under his nose and continues uninterrupted until it merges at the base of his neck with the hair on his chest. The hair on his arms, legs, chest and back would lead one to think he was more simian than human. In temperament, they are likewise as different as chalk and cheese. Eric is all hail-fellow-well-met, he gives bear hugs and slaps on the back to all and sundry. He would spend the day on a sports field – any sport, he excels in all of them and will play, even if injured, until he drops from exhaustion – and when it is too dark to play he retreats to the pub with his friends, sings, laughs and plays darts and billiards until past midnight. He rises with the sunrise and starts all over again the next day. If he has a farthing in his pocket, it will be spent on his friends, on wagering, and on his blessed motorcycle.

“Arthur, on the other hand, is more toward the phlegmatic; much like his mother. He is a fine athlete, but has gone out for harrier, single sculls, boxing, and fencing, and those sports that make demands on the individual rather than the team. He is frugal with his money and uses it to buy the finest in clothes, goods, services, and travel. His income is the exact same as his brother’s, but he has never once approached me for an advance on his salary, while Eric has on many occasions.”

“Is he investing it?” asked Holmes. “Buying land or securities? Putting it aside for a rainy day?”

“Ah no. He is still a young man and not yet thinking in those terms. He saves up his income and then spends it all at once on those things he has set his heart on.”

“And what might those be?”

“I said earlier that both of my boys had become caught up in the motorcycle craze. They both had quite good machines on which to ride. But three months ago Arthur

came home with what all agree is the finest motorcycle in the entire country. There is no bike in the nation to match it. He spent weeks at the Brough factory having George Brough make him a custom-designed machine. There are only a few hundred motorcycles in the country made by Brough. They are said to be the *Rolls-Royce* of motorcycles. They expanded the engine for him from one thousand cubic centimeters to over twelve hundred. The suspension has been improved. The seats are of the finest Morocco leather, and every part of it has either been plated with chrome or painted in gleaming black. He has even embedded two massive cut glass gems, which look for all the world like emeralds, on the flanks of the fuel tank. He shows it off at every rally and picnic held by the club. He has already won several races where the size of the engine is unrestricted. It is his pride and joy. He beams and grins like a little boy on Christmas morning who has just opened his new train set. His brother congratulates him but is green, emerald green no doubt, with envy."

"Does such envy," asked Holmes, "lead to enmity? Is there conflict between them?"

"As schoolboys, they were constantly bickering and competing with each other. At times, I despaired that they would ever get past it. But three years in South Africa got rid of that forever. When brothers are being shot at by the same enemy, sharing the same loads on a forced march, burying the same comrades, and hiding behind the same rock to avoid the deadly sprays of grapeshot, it tends to forge a bond between them that no amount of rivalry over their toys, or on a sports field, or even over a lovely young maiden, can ever damage."

"Well and good," said Holmes. "Your lads are more Castor and Pollux than Cain and Abel. Jolly good. Who else knew the contents of your safe? Friends of your sons? Your household or office staff? Are there other members of your family? Have you other children?"

“I have no other children who are direct issue. My older brother married a young widow and became father to her daughter. He and his wife were killed in a tragic accident many years ago and their little girl, Mary, became my legal responsibility. I have raised her as if she were my own daughter and she has matured into a fine young woman of four and twenty years.”

“Is she still single? What does she do? Does she live under your roof?”

“In order, sir. Yes, she is still single. Not out of lack of interest by no end of heartsick suitors, including both of my sons, who love her devotedly. But whereas they are married to their motorcycles, she is married to her sport. She is a magnificent athlete, a runner, one of the top in all of England in middle distances. She has competed all over Europe and in America in the 5000 meter and five-mile races and is infuriated that the men who control the Olympics will not sanction track and field events for women. I have sponsored her in her sports since she was a child and paid for her coaches and travel and equipment. She is totally devoted to me, every bit as much as my sons are estranged from me. When she is not competing, she has a position in the bank and works diligently there from dawn to dark. And yes, my little Mary lives in this house and is the sunshine of my home, a delight to share conversations with over breakfast and supper.

“As to friends of my children, there have been many over the years but only a few have lasted. George Burnwell, from the Burnwells of Henley-on-Thames, served with Art and Eric in the war and has reappeared recently and become a close friend. He is also besotted with the motorcycle nonsense. Mary has several close friends from her athletic teams, all, like her, sturdy and sterling young women who are dedicated to their sport. They come by frequently and talk about nothing except the latest healthy diets and newest

athletic shoes. They have no turn for business. I doubt they know a farthing from a fence post.

“As to the help – there is the man-servant and the maid. Both have been in service with my family for decades and their parents worked for my parents before that. That they would ever betray me is unthinkable. They could have done so a thousand times in the past and have never so much as claimed a minute to which they were not fully entitled. The maid, Mrs. Allingham, recently hired a young assistant, a second cousin, Miss Lucy Allingham. She came not only from our maid’s family but had good references. She is an uncommonly pretty girl and has attracted no end of young men who follow her home from the market, and find all sorts of excuses to wait around, lovelorn and sad of face. But she cannot be faulted for that. She does not make any attempt to attract them. All she has to do is appear and they come like flies to the honey jar.

“All of these have been privy to conversations, held from time to time, that made reference to my files. In looking back, I confess that I have sometimes made use of veiled references to the contents to enhance attention to my conversation. No one is immune to the attraction of juicy gossip, especially when it concerns the high and mighty and righteous of the nation.

“I could continue with my miserable story, Mr. Holmes, but in a nutshell that is my household. Other than my partner, Stevenson, those are the only ones who have any idea of what is kept in my safe. If there is something I have missed, please inform me.”

“I believe, sir, that you have covered all the essentials for now. We must move on, and quickly. Please give me your focused memory and concentration. If I were to read through these files of yours, who would immediately strike me as the easiest person to blackmail? Who has the dirtiest laundry? Who is most at risk? Which fruit hangs the lowest?”

“That is not a difficult question,” replied Holder. “Lord and Lady Hairfield of Wharram Percy are far and away the most dissolute, degenerate, and depraved of all the noble families in the country. Perhaps in the entire Empire. They are swimming in their filthy riches, from all the rents they collect and the shares they own in countless profitable firms. They must have at least fifty people to whom they make regular monthly payments; all paid to do nothing but keep their mouths shut. On the list are young men, their grooms past and present, who were abused by His Lordship and by all three of his depraved sons; maids who were abused first by Her Ladyship and then His Lordship and then both; at least seven bastard children, sixteen mistresses, and fourteen young male actors, all at one time favorites of Her Ladyship. They hold debauched parties in the estate home and have been known to hire photographers to take obscene and humiliating pictures of their guests in various immoral acts contrary to the laws of nature. The negatives of the photos were subsequently sold for outrageous sums to the fools who appeared in them. All these things and much more are recorded in their file. So, in answer to your question, Mr. Holmes, if I were you and I held the files in hand, I would start with them.”

“An astute recommendation, sir. There is but one amendment to add. It is not ‘I’ but ‘we’ who will start with them. As difficult as it will be, you and I together must visit these noble persons as soon as possible and disclose to them their recently acquired status. We must gain access to whatever communication they will receive from the extortionists. Such information will be our first clue. So, may I ask you, sir, to make contact with these good people and request an immediate interview for you, and me, and Dr. Watson. May I count on you to do that, Mr. Holder?”

The poor fellow’s shoulders sank and he let out an audible sigh. “I do not want to do that at all, Mr. Holmes, but it has to be done. So I shall do it and get it over with as

quickly as possible. I will let you know as soon as I receive a reply.”

“Excellent. Then, sir, allow me to bid you good day. Both of us have work to do.”

Holmes rose and walked out of the parlor and toward the front door. I followed him. In the vestibule, we were met by a remarkably attractive young blonde woman. She was nearly as tall as Holmes, and broad in the shoulders and narrow at the waist. She looked upon us most curiously. “Please excuse me, gentlemen. But are you not Mr. Sherlock Holmes, the detective, and Dr. Watson, the writer? You are, aren’t you? Forgive me. I do not wish to be rude, but I am surprised. May I ask, please, what are you doing in my home?”

“It would be better,” replied Holmes, “if you were to pose that question to your step-father.” He smiled at her and we continued on our way out of the house.

The heat had finally gone out of the day and we walked the several blocks, without speaking, to Knightsbridge Road and hailed a motorized cab. It moved quickly enough to cause a breeze to cool our faces as we drove past Green Park – now dubbed Brown Park due to the effects of the summer drought – and turned north through Mayfair and home to Baker Street.

Chapter Three

How Very Noble



It is difficult to explain to those of you who are reading this later edition of my stories just how great of a sea-change took place in London, and indeed in the entire world, between the time when I first met Sherlock Holmes in the early years of the 1880s and the second decade of the twentieth century. The world changed. Every week it seemed another invention was foisted upon mankind. Holmes and I used to write a dozen or more notes and telegrams a day and send them all over London with the help of an army of boys on bicycles or on foot. Now we picked up the telephone, called into the central switchboard, and within a matter of minutes were speaking to someone on the other side of the city. The familiar telegraph wires that sent Morse code humming around the world had been replaced by wireless telegraphy. A full decade had passed since Mr. Marconi had sent a radio signal clear across the Atlantic Ocean. Now all of the new steamships were equipped with wireless telegraphy, although that did not help to save the thousand souls who perished with the sinking of the *Titanic* in April of the year in which this story took place.

But bad news was blessedly rare, and all of the western world looked forward to continued progress, to the spread of civilization, to the triumph of science, to the free exchange of capital, goods, services, and labor throughout the globe. Even our dour churchmen were no longer predicting the end times and the near approach of Armageddon. Their divine revelations now came with visions of the dawn of the new millennium, ushered in not by Conquest, War, Famine, and

Death but by the upward evolution of the human race, supported by knowledge and enlightenment.

Change was everywhere. Throughout London, service vehicles bringing milk, bread, and ice were still drawn by faithful horses, but the stalwart animal had otherwise been replaced by motorized transport – *horseless carriages* we called them – that roared and sputtered their way through the city, and increasingly across the countryside. A corresponding change took place in the enthusiasms of young men and women for greater speed and power than could ever be achieved by pedaling a bicycle. The most progressive of them abandoned the bicycle craze as quickly as they had adopted it just twenty years ago and embraced the motorcycle. At first, these machines were no more than a modified bicycle with a small engine that could move the rider along a flat road. By 1912 they had become powerful vehicles that surged and soared and roared up and down the peaceful residential streets of the city, across hill and dale of the English countryside, and, with each passing year, up and down race courses that we thought only a mountain goat could traverse.

Most of the drivers were young men, accompanied by their female trophies who, perched behind the drivers, clutched onto the male bodies and pressed their bosoms against their backs as they hung on for dear life, bumping and vibrating for hours on end and, as I can assure you as a doctor, having their blood warmed and their animal spirits enlivened. A few very *avant garde* young women went so far as to toss their gracious, long skirts aside and pull on men's leather trousers, and in a most unfeminine way, take charge of these powerful machines and drive them, unaided by any man.

As young people are wont to do, these motorcycle riders formed themselves into clubs and associations. Most were dedicated only to the pure joy of speed and travel, and social gatherings and outings. Some, however, had a much

more sinister reason for their operations, as Holmes and I were about to discover.

"So then, Holmes," I began as we sat in the back of the cab. "What is your opinion of Mr. Holder's suspects? Can't say as I know what to make of all these motorcycle riders. Both his boys, Arthur and Eric, and their mate – what was his name? George? – all caught up and devoted to nothing else."

"You are forgetting the young woman."

"The niece? Miss Mary? Come now Holmes, she may be an athletic sort and perhaps emancipated in that way, but she was the model of a refined young woman, was she not?"

"Precisely, a refined young woman whose fingernails and knuckles have traces of grease, whose hair had specks of grit all through it and needed a good brushing from being blown in the wind, whose face was flushed but had not a spot of perspiration upon it, and who entered the back door of the house whilst we were sitting in the parlor, stood in the hallway listening to us, climbed the stairs wearing boots, and then appeared, feigning innocence, in a freshly pressed dress and in her stocking feet. Yes, that is the young woman to whom I was referring."

"Are you suggesting to me..."

"I am suggesting nothing, my dear Watson. I am telling you that Miss Mary Holder arrived at the back door of the house on the back of a motorcycle and, having become aware of our presence, immediately moved to disguise her recent activity and to attempt to discover the reason for our visit."

"I appear to have misjudged her entirely. She seemed such a lovely young woman."

"As always, Watson, you are much too much the gentleman to ever suspect a sweet member of the fairer sex. But surely you have observed enough of my cases to know that a pretty face can all too often hide a wicked heart."

I have endured a quarter century now of feeling foolish in my conversations with Holmes. It was not a novel sensation. In reply, as I often did, I sought to recover my wounded pride. "Ah, but one thing I did not miss, Holmes, was your sly hand signal telling me not to reveal that I had served in the same regiment as his sons. I have no doubt you will now call on me to do a bit of sleuthing amongst the old boys of the Northumberland Fusiliers."

Holmes turned and with his unfeigned and disarming smile said "Precisely, my dear friend. As a veteran of that regiment, you have purchase where I have none. It would be a useful strategy if we did not immediately reveal that possible connection. Although I may have to ask you to make use of it before this case has been resolved."

My dear wife was off visiting family in the North so I took advantage of Mrs. Hudson's cooking and the unique company of Sherlock Holmes, and stayed over in my old familiar room at 221B Baker Street. I rose in the morning to find Holmes already at the table, puffing on his pipe and reading some documents.

"Ah, good morning, Watson. It really is good to have you back here, even if only for a few days. I do believe I miss you, old chap."

I could not let that one go. "No doubt not as much as I missed you when you were dead for three years." I still had not forgiven him for that escapade.

"Oh, tut, tut, now. Let bygones be bygones. And besides, now you have a new adventure to help me with and you know, and I know, that you cannot resist the attraction. Like a moth drawn to a flame you are, old chap. And the game is afoot with this most recent affair. Holder rang me up first thing this morning saying that he had heard back from Lord and Lady Hairball..."

"I believe the name was Hair ... *field*."

“Quite right you are. Lord and Lady Hairbrain ... that they were available to meet with us this morning at half past ten. It should prove to be an interesting meeting. I fully expect fits of apoplexy when they learn that their debauched affairs are about to be fodder for the prurient press.”

By mid-morning the sun was already beating down on the streets of London. Mrs. Hudson had plied us with iced lemonade before we departed and I pitied those poor souls who had no choice but to work in the factories and offices that would be like blast furnaces by noon hour. Fortunately, the noble couple had suggested that we meet in Brown’s Hotel in Mayfair where the management had devised a way to have their mechanical fans blow air over the tops of large blocks of ice and reduce the temperature in their dining room to a level verging on pleasant.

Alexander Holder was waiting for us just inside the front door. He looked like death warmed over and I felt badly for him, knowing that one of his wealthiest clients was about to close his account and, in a fully justified rage, destroy the reputation of the banking firm of Holder and Stevenson.

“Good to see you holding up so well,” I said to him as we entered. “Keep the upper lip stiff, old boy, you will make it through.” By the looks of him, I did not think he would make it alive to lunch time, but it was all I could think of to say.

“Lord and Lady Hairfield are in the parlor,” was all he said. We followed him and were greeted by an exceptionally well-dressed couple who I judged to be both in their early sixties. Lord Hairfield was shorter than me and somewhat heavier. His wife was shorter than he, and significantly heavier.

“Come in. Come in,” His Lordship called cheerfully to us when he saw us in the entrance of the parlor. “Come in. Sit down. You must be hot. Beastly out there, isn’t it? Let me have the staff bring you a cold drink. What will it be? A cold beer? How about a gin and tonic with some ice? Too early in

the day for that? Oh my, it is never too early for a cold G and T, at least not in the summer.” He laughed loudly.

“Oh, Bully,” said his wife, and she laughed too. Her heavy bosom, as well as the rolls of fat around her stomach, bounced as she giggled.

“Our lucky day, is it not, Honey-Pot? We get to meet the famous detective, Sherlock Holmes. Now this is what I call a superbly hot day.” Again he laughed and took another quaff of his drink. He laughed again, nodding his head up and down as he did so, causing the folds of flesh beneath his chin to alternate between bulging and retreating.

“Oh, Bully,” said his wife, again laughing, and again causing a repeat of the bodily fluctuations noted above.

Holmes and I stole a glance at each other. I could only conclude that Mr. Holder had asked for the meeting without revealing the reason behind it, and the impending destruction of the reputations of the all-too-jolly Lord and Lady.

“Alex, how can we thank you?” continued Lord Hairfield. “We’ve been reading the stories about Sherlock Holmes for years and finally, we get to meet him, in the flesh. And Dr. Watson with him, the most popular writer in all of England. A splendid day, even if it is god-awful hot outside.”

Mr. Holder introduced Holmes and me to the couple. We were seated and immediately supplied with large tumblers full of ice, gin and tonic water.

“Your Lordship,” began Mr. Holder, “you did read the message I sent to you yesterday, did you not?”

“Why of course we did, Alex. Gave us the best laugh we have had all week, didn’t it Honey-Pot?”

“Absolutely, divinely, hilarious,” replied his wife, giggling.

“And this morning, just as you predicted, *this* arrives in the post. And, oh my, didn’t we get another good laugh out of that. Jolly lucky I was not drinking my tea while reading it.” He opened the letter, gave it a quick glance, emitted several loud guffaws and placed it on the coffee table.

Holmes picked up the letter and read it quickly. He handed it to me. The brief note demanded ten thousand pounds else all would be revealed in the press within two days.

"You will excuse me, sir," said Holmes quite sharply. "I fail to see how the destruction of the reputation of your family, which is about to be dragged through the mud in every newspaper in the country, is a laughing matter. Do you not understand what this letter is demanding?"

"Oh, my good man, of course, I understand what it is demanding," replied Lord Hairfield, with a warm, if condescending, smile. "They are going to print the names, and with luck the photographs, of all those delightful people who are kept on the family payroll. And, deluded fools that they are, they believe that doing so will ruin our reputation. Really, Mr. Holmes, how stupid can our English criminal class be? Kindly let me enlighten you. We are living in the twentieth century, not the Inquisition. My wife and I have worked very diligently to establish our reputation as the most progressive, most modern, and most advanced thinkers amongst the nobility. We both took our degrees at Cambridge and we embraced the correct understanding of human sexuality, a *scientific* understanding. Human beings are highly evolved animals, the paragon of animals, the pinnacle of Nature's long slow climb from the primordial mud. As such we are free to enjoy all the pleasures of the flesh, just as our lesser relatives in the animal kingdom do. And the English speaking people, as the apex of the human race, the most highly evolved, have a moral obligation to lead the rest of the world out of the dark ages of absurd religious restraint and demonstrate to them that the joys of sexuality should be embraced ... do pardon the pun ... and enjoyed by, between, and amongst all ages, all races, all religions, and all sexes.

"My dear wife, Her Ladyship, has just written a brilliant new book explaining all of the scientific principles on which

our reputation has been established. You did bring a copy of your book, did you not Honey-Pot?"

"Of course, Bully darling," replied her Ladyship. "Just the final proof, mind you. To be released in a week from now. Would you like a copy, Mr. Holmes? I can sign it for you." Not waiting for an answer, she opened the book to the title page, added her signature, and handed it to Holmes.

Holmes handed it to me.

The Riddle of the Human Race Solved – The Scientifically Proven Basis for Free Love

Inwardly I shuddered.

Lord Hair ... whatever it was, continued. "As soon as I read the letter from our would-be blackmailers I called my publisher and read it to him. And, my goodness, if he didn't let out a whoop of joy and laughter you could have heard a mile away. He immediately doubled the first run of the book. Those silly fools said they would send off our secrets to every leading newspaper in the country. Why, for a million pounds we could not have arranged such tremendous publicity. The timing could not have been better."

Holmes was uncharacteristically speechless. I looked at Her Ladyship and said, "Surely you understand that countless people who have never heard of you are going to form their opinions based on what they read in the papers. Does that not concern you at all?"

The rotund lord let out a loud, blustering, sputtering laugh. "Heavens above, Dr. Watson, every newspaper in the country does nothing more than pander to the prejudices of their readers. The *Daily Mirror* is read by people who think they run the country. The *Guardian* is read by people who think they ought to run the country. The *Times* is read by people who actually do run the country. The *Daily Mail* is read by the wives of the people who run the country. The *Financial Times* is read by the people who own the country. The *Daily Worker* is read by people who think the country

ought to be run by people from another country. The *Daily Telegraph* is read by people who think it is."

"Sweetheart, what about those who read the *Evening Star*?" asked his wife.

"It is read by men who never think at all, and can only turn to page three and ogle at the latest young miss with enlarged mammaries."

"Oh Bully," said his wife, her entire torso now convulsing, "but you mustn't forget to add that they are also the men who can hold the *Evening Star* in one hand while ogling." She gave her husband an impish smile.

For a moment he said nothing and then exploded in laughter, slapping his thigh repeatedly. "Oh, Honey-Pot ... oh, my dearest Honey-Pot ... that was brilliant. I must remember it. Dr. Watson, did you write that down? For readers who hold the paper with one hand, oh my. Their left hand, of course. That was brilliant darling."

Lord Hairbra... Lord Hairfield," snapped Holmes. "The press is about to print the names of nearly fifty people who have been blackmailing you. Blackmail is a serious criminal act. You are about to be forced to testify in endless criminal cases and every aspect of your personal life made public. Sir, this is not a matter for frivolity."

The Lord and Lady looked at each other and broke out into yet another round of laughter. His Lordship used his handkerchief to wipe a tear from his eye. "Mr. Holmes, sir, do let me help you in your detective work. Blackmailers, by definition, would be our enemies. All those folks to whom we send money are our friends. Our favorites. Do you really think they would keep coming to our parties if it were not for the money? Look at us please, sir. We are well into our sixties. Good living and gravity have taken their toll. What cute young groom, or pretty young maid, or handsome young actor could we ever induce to engage in delightfully pleasurable acts were it not for having them all on an allowance? Please, sir, use your famous sense of logic. We

only demand that they keep their mouths shut because if all of their friends knew how they earned their allowance, we would have no end of eager applicants. Half of Oxbridge and the entire scouting movement would be lined up outside my office the next morning. If all their names do become public, we shall just cut them all off and replace them.

“So tell me, mister detective, under what system of logic would I pay someone *not* to give me better publicity than money could ever buy? Sales of Her Ladyship’s books will soar. I fully expect to be invited to do a lecture tour of America. My adult children will establish a trust for the promotion of free love and invite subscriptions from around the world. And here... look at this. This is our reply to our blackmailers. Clever isn’t it. My son drew it. Quite the brilliant artist isn’t he?”

He pulled a sheet of paper from his suit pocket and handed it to Holmes, who quickly handed it over to me. The salutation read:

Dear stupid blackmailers:

Below was a crudely drawn cartoon of a toddler clad only in a nappy and throwing a temper tantrum. Protruding from his anus was a rolled page of paper. A label pointing to the screaming child read “YOU,” another pointing to the rolled up page read “YOUR DEMANDS.” The caption below read: LORD AND LADY H. RESPOND TO BLACKMAILERS.

“Brilliant, don’t you agree?” blustered His Lordship. “If I sent a copy to all of the papers, I’m sure that at least some of them would print it. What do you think, Mr. Holmes?”

“Indubitably,” said Holmes. “And as there is no need for further parlay, allow me to wish you good morning. And I thank you for the refreshment. And Mr. Holder, sir, I will be in contact with you this afternoon.” He stood up, turned and walked out the door. I bade them likewise and followed.

Once inside a cab I found myself chuckling and shaking my head. "Well, Holmes, that one has to take the cake. Didn't see that one coming did we?" I chuckled some more and looked over at Holmes. He was not smiling. He sat with his chin upon his breast and his hat drawn down over his eyes.

"Really, Holmes. You do not see any humor in it? You mustn't take yourself so seriously all the time. After all these years it is quite all right to laugh at ourselves sometimes, isn't it?"

"At first glance," he replied, "it may appear ironic. I have learned, however, that the criminal class, much like the British press, are quite prepared to ridicule, abuse, and disdain whomever they choose, but they are exceptionally thin-skinned and prickly when the tables are turned. They take great offense when someone ridicules them. They are quick to take revenge. They will strike back."

Chapter Four Pulling My Leg



Later that afternoon Holmes rang up Mr. Holder. I could only hear what Holmes was saying but, by the look on his face, he was not happy. He hung up and turned to me.

“Our client’s mood appears to have brightened somewhat. The noble lord and lady have promised to invest the royalties from the book through his bank. They are quite sure that the massive sales will more than make up for any clients he might lose because of truly embarrassing revelations. I had no interest in hearing anything more about that matter, so I just told him we would come to his home following supper and speak to his new young maid.”

“Are you really placing a young maid, still in her teens, on your list of suspects?” I asked.

“She is the only one available to speak to,” Holmes replied. “And, according to our client, she has not been in service to the family long enough to have established unquestioned loyalty. If she is so beautiful as to attract an endless stream of working-class male callers, then there is good reason to question her. She may herself be entirely innocent, but I have learned that young men, such as those she attracts, who are ruled by their hormones and passions, are often susceptible to foolish choices, and occasionally those choices are criminal.”

We waited until after the supper hour to make our visit, knowing that by then the worst of the heat would have gone

from the day and that our pretty young suspect would be free from her duties.

We were met at the door by Mr. Holder's butler. "Good evening, gentlemen. We received notice of your visit. Please, just wait here and I will fetch Miss Parr." He turned and walked back toward the kitchen. We waited for what I thought a surprisingly long time and then heard steps quickly descending the back staircase, followed the arrival of a young woman scampering through the hallway to the front door.

The young woman – no more than seventeen years old – who appeared in front of us most certainly deserved her reputation for attractiveness. Her body was not at all undernourished. Her face was full with chipmunk's cheeks, bright blue eyes, and a smile that, for a working-class English girl, displayed an unusually straight set of gleaming white teeth. As her duties for the day had ended, she had changed her clothes from her maid's uniform and into a simple close-fitting white dress. The bodice was cut lower than most English mothers would permit and drew immediate attention to a generously endowed bosom. Her posterior, which was tightly covered by the thin white cotton material of the dress, was rounded as if two footballs, pushed up against each other, were trapped underneath. A less than completely honorable thought flashed across my mind, and I imagined that she could easily adorn page three of the *Evening Star*.

"Good evening, Mr. Watson and Dr. Holmes," she said as she curtsied. "Please, kind sirs, forgive me for being tarty, I hope I didn't incontinence you by your having to wait."

For a full second, Holmes paused, speechless, before responding. "Ah, no miss. Not at all. It is Miss Lucy, is it not?"

"Yes sir, that is I, sir. Me mom always called me Loosey-Goosey. So just plain-jane Lucy is quite fine by me, sir. Will you come and sit in the paramour?"

She turned and walked into the front room. Instead of putting her feet in a straightforward fashion, one beside the other as she walked, she almost crossed them, one in front of the other, causing her gluteus maximus to rotate noticeably with each step.

"You two gentlemen must be terribly hot. The cook has prepared some cold lemonade. It's very detestable. Let me fetch some."

She turned and bustled into the kitchen. Holmes and I looked at each other and simultaneously rolled our eyes.

Lucy returned bearing a tray of cold drinks. She leaned forward from her waist while laying it on the coffee table, providing a thinly veiled display of two more of her god-given assets.

"The master said that I must feel you freely and not be inhabited when answering your questions, so please sirs, feel me freely yourselves to ask anything."

"Please miss," I said. "There is no need for you to stand. Please, be seated and make yourself comfortable."

She did and flashed a coquettish smile toward us. Holmes began his interrogation, but I had a distinct sense that he had already come most of the way to a conclusion concerning our lovely suspect.

"Miss Lucy, I understand that you have only recently entered service with the Holder family? Is that correct? Are you happy with your position?"

"Oh, yes sir. Very happy, sir. The master pays me a very fair constipation. The rest of the help treat me very decent, sir. I've only been here these past three months, but I consider myself formative to have found such a good position, sir."

"I'm sure you are. What have you been told regarding the purpose of our visit and our request to speak to you?"

"Oh sir, the head maid, Miss Goonever, she said that it was all because someone had robbed the master of his filings. He was storing them in his safe, and some dreadful

thief broke into his office, and undid the copulation lock on the safe and took away the filings, sir. And the master went and hired Dr. Sherlock Holmes to track down the thief and restore the master's filings to him and improve the laxative security around the house. That is what I was told sir."

"And were you told what was in those filings, as you call them?"

"Well sir, I wasn't told directly by Miss Goonever, my superior. But the two boys, sir, Arthur and Eric, they let on a bit, they did sir. All of us on the household staff, we call Arthur and Eric, *the boys*, which supposably is not correct since they are well beyond the age of minority. And they do tease me quite a bit, sir. Not in a bad way, just having a bit of fun at my expanse, they say. So I can never be certain if what they say is god's awful truth. But they said that the master's safe held all sorts of secrets about their motorcycle business."

"Their motorcycle business?" queried Holmes. "I thought they were all in the banking business."

"Well, that's what they want you to think, sir. But anybody can see that there's no money to be made in being a banker, sir. I mean, I haven't had much schooling and even I can tell that if you give someone your money to hold on to and keep safe, like I do every week with my wages, and they guard it for you and they give it back to you whenever you want, and they even give you some extra ... well where's the profane in that? Which is what I asked the boys, and they confessed, they did, that the bank was all a pretend thing. Really, they were buying motorcycles and selling them for more. And because every bloke on the block is crazy for motorcycles these days they have to queue up to get one, and the order of the queue had to be a secret, else the customers would be fighting. In the safe they kept all the secrets about who is going to be getting the motorcycle next. That's what they told me, Dr. Holmes. Of course, with

the boys, I could never tell if they were being straight with me or pulling my labia. They do like to tease, sir."

It was all I could do not to break out laughing, but Holmes carried on with a straight face.

"Now the boys may have teased you, but did they treat you properly?"

"Oh yes, sir. Art and Eric are gentlemen, sir. They have taken me on as their little sister, in a way. Anybody can see that they are all smitten with Miss Mary. Now, George, he's a different story. He would flirt with a two-legged fence post and he is quite the cad with me, but I know he's just being a dandy. He's not terrible serious about anything."

"Yes, Miss Lucy, but on a more serious note, I have learned that you have had many young men come to call on you. That, of course, is not surprising, as you are an exceptionally attractive young woman."

Lucy immediately dropped her eyes, raising them a moment later and one more time flashing her irresistible smile. "Well sir, it seems that a lot of young chaps fancy me. Me mom told me it was because of my volumptumus figure, and said they would say all sorts of nice things to me, but she told me that I just had to remind them that flatulence would get them no where. And that they had to have prospects and treat me respectful if they wanted to see me more than once, sir."

"And did some come to see you more than once? Have any asked about Mr. Holder's affairs? Or about the safe in his office?"

"Well sir, the green-grocer with the wooden leg named Friday has been coming around for several weeks. And he has asked some questions, sir."

With great self-restraint, I held my tongue and refrained from asking the name of his other leg. I now stopped writing and wondered if we had found ourselves on Robinson Crusoe's island. Holmes was obviously as perplexed as I was.

“Miss Lucy, are you seeing a young man with a wooden leg named *Friday*?”

“Oh no sir, that’s not his name, but he’s the chap who I see every Friday. I can never keep track of them all otherwise, what with their being called Jim or Jack or John or Jacob or James or Jerry or Josh. But I do know that I am free of my duties every Monday, Wednesday and Friday evening, and every other Saturday from five o’clock on, and every other Sunday, all day. So I just assign a chap to one of those days. I have a regular Monday and a Friday, and a Sunday as it stands this week. Wednesday and Saturday are open for any that want to come and lay out their prospects and do like they do in the theater, sort of like an addition.”

Holmes cocked his head slightly and nodded. “A very logical and sensible approach. Indeed, exceptionally logical. However, this Friday chap – what did he ask about Mr. Holder’s filings, the papers in the safe? Did he ask if you had even seen them? Or read them?”

“That wouldn’t have done him much good, sir. I’m not a very good reader, sir. I only stayed in school until I was twelve years old sir. And then me mom pulled me out.”

“Oh, I am sorry to hear that.”

“It was a trying time, sir. My teacher told me mom that I was illiterate. Well me mom was right angry about that seeing as she and me dad were married for a full two months before I was born. He had just been let out of penile servitude. Well, me mom has her pride sir, and she wasn’t going to have any school marm impregnating her honor, so she says that she’s had it with my schooling and I can go and make my way in the world. My face is my fortune, she tells me. So I better be wise about using it to my benedict. But as far as Friday goes sir, it was my fault to begin with. I confess that I was trying a bit to impress him with how responsible a position I had and I told him that I knew what was in Mr. Holder’s safe, and since then he has been all over me like a bad rash asking about it. You see, sir, he is just

dying for a motorcycle, even just a small one, and he thinks that I can get his name in the queue. Frankly, sir, I think he's more interested in the motorcycle than he is in me, and that's why he keeps coming around."

On that note, Holmes leaned back in his chair and folded his arms across his chest and smiled. "My dear, you have been very helpful. I thank you. Unless there is any other piece of information you believe that we should know, I do not think we should detain you any longer. A new Mr. Wednesday should be waiting for you by now."

Lucy raised the volume of her voice and said, "Just give me a moment, sir, to think if there is anything else I should reveal to you." Then, in silence, she rose and walked around to the back of the chairs in which Holmes and I were sitting. She put a hand on each of our shoulders and leaned her body in so that her face was very close to our ears and her ample breasts pushing into our backs. She spoke in a whisper. "You cannot see her from where you are sitting sir, but I could see that all the time we have been talking, Miss Mary has been standing in the hallway peeping around the corner, listening to every word." Then she backed away and in a louder voice said, "No sir. Cannot think of anything. Hope I have been some good for you. Always pleased to be able to help this wonderful family in any way I can." She turned and began to exit the room. I could hear a quick set of steps out in the hallway.

Holmes asked the butler if we could speak briefly with Mr. Holder before leaving. Our client appeared shortly and Holmes requested that he arrange an opportunity to interview his two sons as well as their friend, George Burnwell.

"I will do as you request, Mr. Holmes," said the banker. "But I fear I might not be successful. I have only seen my sons very briefly in passing over the past two days. I had initially accused them of opening and stealing the contents of my safe. I was very hard on them. But your demonstration

of how easy it was for any competent thief to do so made it obvious that my conclusions were premature, and I had to apologize to them. They were nevertheless angry with me for my false accusation and have been as scarce as hen's teeth ever since. I will do what I can, but I cannot make any promises."

He had, however, made a list from his memory of every name that had been in the missing files and divided them into a rough order of priority with those he deemed most vulnerable at the top of the list and those least at the bottom. Holmes thanked him for his efforts and we bid him good evening.

It was somewhat cooler now and we walked up to Knightsbridge Road to catch a cab. At the first corner, a cab pulled up beside us. The door opened and a woman's voice called out.

"Oh, hello there, Mr. Sherlock Holmes. Please sir, a word before you leave."

A young woman stepped out of the cab and turned to pay the driver. She then turned around and came directly toward us. Odd, I thought. It was Mary Holder. She was elegantly dressed, looking quite lovely and carrying a Gladstone bag.

"I saw that it was you, Mr. Holmes. I am just returning from the athletic club, but I had to stop and say thank you for all the help you have given our family."

"Thank you, Miss Holder," responded Holmes graciously. "You are being far too generous. I have really done nothing at all so far."

"Oh but you have, sir. I know that Dad's files are still missing and that he is terribly upset about it, but the discord it created within our family was infinitely more dreadful. After the theft was discovered, Dad went into a rage and blamed my brothers, and of course, they may be a bit on the adventurous side, but you know what a woman's instincts are. I know that they would never steal anything. And so they were very cross with Dad and stormed out of the house.

But then you came along and proved within a few minutes that anyone of a hundred thieves in London could have broken in and opened the safe and stolen the files. Well, of course, Dad went to Art and Eric and said he was sorry and the anger all went away. And we are so indebted to you, Mr. Holmes. Thank you. Oh, I mustn't hold you up any longer. I just had to say thank you, that's all."

With that, she turned and walked quickly back toward her home. We got inside the cab that she had conveniently vacated.

"Holmes," I began as we hummed and chugged our way back to Baker Street, "I'm afraid that I am blind as a mole as to what all happened in the past hour. The maid is as thick as a plank, but then she turns into a spy and informs on Miss Mary. Now, this time, I was listening, and I did hear someone behind the door, but it wasn't Mary. So why did the maid say it was her, and who could it have been?"

Holmes gave me a look that I have become wearily used to over the past twenty-five years. A friendly look, but condescending nonetheless.

"It was Mary Holder behind the door."

"That's impossible. She was out at her athletic club all the while. You just saw that."

He sighed, a little more than was necessary. "My dear friend, it was the most amateurish of ruses that I have seen in a long time." He sighed again. "To start with, how much did she pay the cabbie?"

"I can't say as I noticed."

"One shilling."

"One shilling? That's impossible. You cannot get a motorized cab to drive you around the block for one shilling."

"Excellent, Watson. Now, if you had just been at an athletic club, training for a five thousand meter run on a warm summer evening, what color would your face be?"

"Hmm. I suppose I would be flushed."

“No, my friend, you would be beet red if you were, in fact, still alive. She, however, would be flushed. And was she?”

“No. No. Can’t say as she was. I guess I would have to say that she looked as fresh as a daisy.”

“You could add to that a daisy that had bathed in the past hour and was giving off the pleasant odor of lavender.”

“Very well, Holmes, it is possible that she took some bath supplies and her evening clothes with her to the club and freshened up after her running. I would guess that she uses the ladies club in Kensington, and I am sure they have excellent facilities for those purposes. That way their patrons can put soaps and fragrances into their satchel along with their athletic clothing. Why else would she be carrying a Gladstone?”

“Are you referring, Watson, to the empty satchel she was toting around as if it were as light as a feather?”

I did not want to confess that indeed I had fallen short of competent observation yet again. So I asked the obvious question. “It’s all dark to me, Holmes. Why should she want to do that? Why would she try to deceive us?”

Now Holmes smiled warmly. “Precisely, my friend. Precisely. And that is the perplexity. This case is becoming like the proverbial onion. I cannot yet imagine how many more layers there are to discover.” He folded his arms across his chest and smiled and nodded several more times before we reached Baker Street.

Once we were ensconced in our familiar chairs in our room, and sipping alternately on ice water and brandy, I ventured to ask the other question that had been plaguing me.

“Holmes, what did you think of the maid? I could not tell if you were ready to walk away having concluded that she was as dumb as a post, or if you thought otherwise.”

Holmes took a slow sip on his brandy and responded. “My first response was to write her off as being terminally stupid. Yet I have this nagging suspicion that while we sit here

talking about her, she is having a jolly good laugh at our expanse, telling Mr. Wednesday about our conversation. I will have to leave her on the list – another layer in the onion.”

Chapter Five

Norton Rules



The following morning I rose at my regular hour only to catch Holmes for a fleeting moment before he raced out the door.

“My best to you, my good doctor,” said he as he stood, sipping on the remaining coffee in his cup. “I have been going over the list that Holder gave me and I really must find a way to get much more data about his sons and their friend. I do not expect to be back until late this evening. I trust that your patients will not collapse from the heat while on their way to your office.”

He departed and I made my way through breakfast and over to my office. It was located between Marylebone Station and Little Venice and was not much of a walk, but it was already getting hot and the dust, so multiplied by the lack of rain, made the short journey quite unpleasant. My examinations of my few patients were desultory and I returned to Baker Street part way through the afternoon. The newsboys were on the streets hawking their papers and I could not resist buying several to see what was being reported about Lord and Lady Hairfield.

As expected, whoever had stolen Mr. Holder’s files, and subsequently been laughed at by Lord Bully and Lady and Honey-Pot, had done as threatened and disclosed the names and the amounts paid to the long list of those who provided personal services to the noble couple. The *Evening Star* ran the story on their front page and continued it on the second page. On page three, in the place of the usual photo of a young lass with excessive cleavage, they had one labeled

Her Ladyship's Latest Conquests. It was a collage of pictures of two handsome young actors, and two actresses, noting their names and the current West End theater productions in which they currently had minor roles.

Lady Hairfield's book publisher had purchased a large ad on the same page, as had the theaters in which the young paramours were performing. I recalled the proverb first stated by Oscar Wilde — *the only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about*. I was quite certain that sales of both the book and theater tickets would be enhanced.

The *Times* placed the story on page four and only devoted a few column inches to it. Their story ran as follows:

Nobles Being Naughty Again (Ho-Hum)

Ho-hum. Lord and Lady Hairfield, keeping up their hard-earned reputation for immoral behavior (ho-hum), have been paying several hundred pounds every month to over forty men and women who, it is claimed, were in a position to blackmail the nobles based on their well-known acts of sexual deviance. Ho-hum. The Times will begin a search throughout all of London to see if we can discover any citizen who is surprised by this (ho-hum) information. In the meantime, we will continue to report on events that are actually news.

The *Guardian*, again as might be expected, printed the crude cartoon of the cry-baby, and praised the progressive couple for their courage, wit and brave British pluck. I somehow doubted that a Tory couple would have received similar treatment.

I had hoped to share the papers with Holmes but, as he had predicted, he was not home at supper time and had not returned by the time I retired for the evening.

My years of service in the Afghanistan campaigns were far in my past, but one of the lasting marks they left on me was my habit of sleeping lightly. At first light the following

morning, I wakened to the sound of some ungodly roar coming up from Baker Street. It was not constant but rose quickly through a loud crescendo, continued for several seconds, and then died and went silent, only to be repeated a few moments later.

I quickly pulled on some informal clothes and my shoes and hustled over to the window, anxious to find out the origin of the disturbance and to end it if I possibly could. My friend, Sherlock Holmes, had most likely not been able retire to his bed until very late, and our dear Mrs. Hudson was no longer of an age that easily endured unplanned early morning awakenings.

On the street below I saw a man straddling a large motorcycle. His head was covered in a leather aviator's helmet, and he was dressed mostly in leather and corduroy, with high boots reaching above his calves and goggles over his eyes. Repeatedly he was turning the handlebar grip causing the throttle to increase and the blasted roar to be emitted.

Enough of this inconsiderate nonsense, I thought, and descended the stairs and marched out onto Baker Street.

Another mark left over from my time in the military service was my unhesitant confidence in giving a good dressing down to younger men who were acting foolishly.

"Stop that this instant!" I ordered. "This is a respectable neighborhood. Decent people, some of them elderly, are still sleeping. Not take yourself and your blasted machine and get out of here ... Now ... Go!" I pointed north.

The impudent rider did not even turn to look at me. Instead, he slowly and deliberately rotated the throttle until the sound of the engine was near deafening.

I was enraged. I reached over and grabbed the key out of the ignition and removed it, turning the engine off. I then started walking north on Baker Street toward Regent's Park. I shouted back over my shoulder. "If you want your key back, then turn that thing around and *walk it* to the edge of the

park and then leave. Otherwise, your key will be tossed down the sewer!”

The voice that replied stopped me in my tracks.

“Ahhh, Watson. You are spoiling all my fun. How shall I enjoy my new toy if you won’t let me play with it?”

I turned on my heel and marched back. The rider had a silly handlebar mustache and bushy black sideburns, but the eyes behind the goggles were unmistakable.

“Sherlock Holmes!” I thundered. “Have you lost your mind? What, in heaven’s name, do you think you are doing?”

He was positively grinning. “My dear doctor, it is a necessary part of my investigation.”

“Investigation? Nonsense! You are fifty-seven years old, not twenty-seven. If you fall off this thing, you will break every bone in your body. Have you lost your senses!?”

“Not at all, my dear doctor,” he replied, still grinning from ear to ear. “It has been impossible to secure any time with the Holder boys or their friend. So I joined their club, and will now have copious opportunity to watch and interrogate them. The game is in play, my friend, and it is tied somehow to this motorcycle business. *Ergo*, I am now an avid motorcyclist. Elementary, Watson. You must agree.”

“No, Holmes!” I snapped back. “I do not have to agree. These noisy contraptions are the bane of the English countryside. No respectable gentleman would be caught dead on one.”

“Only a gentleman,” he replied, “who has never tried one. They really are quite wonderful. Positively thrilling. The wind in your face, the speed, the sensation of power ... are irresistible. Oh, but before you take any more strips off of me, do take a look in the box beside you.”

I was still infuriated but was at a loss for words. I looked down to the pavement and saw a box about a foot and a half square with the distinctive green markings of *Harrods*.

“Open it,” said Holmes. “It is for you.”

Now I was quite puzzled, but it is not every day that I am presented with a box from Harrods so I stooped down and opened it. I removed the protective tissue paper and extracted a gleaming pair of riding boots, followed by a leather aviator's helmet and a set of goggles.

"What do you mean, these are for me?" I demanded.

"My dear, dear Watson. It would not be at all sporting of me to fail to share my toy with my friend. Now toss your shoes back in the doorway, pull on your boots and climb on."

"Sherlock Holmes! I will do no such thing. Just because you have taken leave of your senses it does not mean that I am going to."

He laughed merrily. "Of course, it does. And I know you, John Watson. I know you want to, and you know you do."

I glared at him, but I knew I had lost this round. My common sense was wilting quickly.

"D— you, Sherlock Holmes," I said as I snatched the boots and walked over to the door marked 221B. I sat on the second step, pulled off my shoes and tugged the boots up and over my calves. Holmes was laughing at me as I walked back to him and, admitting defeat, I laughed as well as I swung my leg up over the back wheel, perched on the seat behind him, and grasped onto his coat.

"Fine," I said. "Just this once. Now get moving and get it over with."

He did not move. Several seconds later he turned his head back toward me. "I need the key."

"Fine." I pulled it out of my pocket and gave it to him. He turned on the machine, gave the throttle a load roar, and engaged the first gear.

I will confess that it was quite a pleasant sensation to move through the empty streets of early morning. The air was still cool and combined with the feeling of vibrations through my body it was mildly exhilarating. We proceeded along Marylebone Road until we reached Edgeware Road,

and then turned north and drove into the countryside. By the time we reached Brent Cross the houses had been left behind and we zoomed past fields and woodlots. Then I saw ahead of us a long straight stretch of road and I could not help but shout in Holmes's ear. "Let it roar, Holmes. Let it roar!"

He turned the throttle until we were racing along at a faster speed than I have ever moved in my life. Even the locomotive on the Great Western Railway would be left in our dust. There was a small rise in the road ahead. We went over it and I felt the strange but wonderful sensation of my body descending while my stomach was still in the air. Two more small rises and dips did the same thing again.

After no more than ten minutes Holmes slowed down at a crossroad and turned the motorcycle around until we were facing back to London. He leaned back to me and said. "Would you mind getting off for just a moment?"

I did as requested and he followed. Then he turned to me, again grinning. "Your turn, Watson. Let's see what you can do."

"Holmes, don't be mad. I have no idea how to drive this thing."

"Neither did I until yesterday afternoon. But you know how to ride a bicycle, and a horse. It is not much different. You have been watching me closely all the way up here. Just do what I did."

He gave a friendly clap on my shoulder. "I know you want to, and you know you do too."

"D— you, Sherlock Holmes," I sputtered through my laugh. I grasped the handlebars and swung a leg up and over, and Holmes clambered on behind me. With my left foot, I kicked the gear into place and gingerly turned up the throttle. The powerful beast lurched forward beneath me. Off we went back down Edgeware Road, over the bumps that left our stomachs behind, and on toward the last bump in the road, after which I would have to slow down out of

respect for the houses from which pedestrians would soon be emerging. I could see the final rise in the road and, instead of slowing for it, I turned the throttle up to full bore. A glance at the speedometer told me that we were now moving at over sixty miles per hour. We hit the rise and for what felt like an eternity but was probably no more than one full second, we were airborne. We defied gravity and floated through the air with a sense of joy and wonder that I swear cannot be matched. Our tires soon reconnected with the macadam and I slowed down to a sensible speed, and carefully drove us back to Baker Street.

When we reached the curb in front of our door, Holmes gave a few blasts on his police whistle and three of his latest generation of Baker Street Irregulars appeared, two looking as if they had just wakened up. Their eyes all went wide when they saw the motorcycle.

"You are to watch this," said Holmes, gesturing to the machine. "I am not going to pay you a single farthing for doing so, but I will promise to take each one of you for rides on the weekend. Is that acceptable, gentlemen?"

The answer came in gasps and whoops of "Yes sir ... oh, yes sir ... indeed, sir..."

Holmes and I were giggling like schoolboys as we climbed the stairs. He doffed his mustache and other facial hair as he entered the front, room. We were met by a stern looking Mrs. Hudson, glaring at us, her hands firmly on her hips, and shaking her head.

She harrumphed. "There is a play on at the Duke of York's Theater. It's called *Peter Pan* and its all about boys who never grew up."

Holmes and I looked sheepishly at each other and then giggled some more. "My dear, Mrs. Hudson," he replied. "Doing anything this evening? Fancy going for a ride?"

With this, she began to laugh as well, which was a somewhat dangerous turn of events as she was pouring our coffee at the same time.

“All well and good, Holmes,” I said. “Now, back to business. Catch me up on the past twenty-four hours. Start by telling me where you got that thing.”

“I bought it at Harrods. The tale about having to queue up was stuff and nonsense. I ordered it in the morning and it was there for me by noon. It was a toss up between the Norton Big Four or the Trusty Triumph, but I settled on the Norton. I must admit that I spent a good part of the day riding around on it. And then, being a proud owner, I went and joined the Beryl Bikers. And here is my membership pin.”

He opened the front of his jacket. Pinned to the inside was a brooch. I could see that the metal was cast as a motorcycle, and the two wheels were both small green beryls, what most of us know as emeralds.

“Those cannot be real beryls, are they?” I asked.

“I am sure they are just cut glass, but quite smart looking all the same.”

“Why did they not use diamonds? It would have been a cut above emeralds?”

“The Beryl Bikers are all, it seems, veterans of His Majesty’s BEF. There is another club that has members from the Royal Navy, and they had already claimed the diamond.”

I countered that remark. “Holmes, you were never in the military. How did they let you in?”

“Of course, I was in the service. I am a proud member of the Northumberland Fusiliers and a veteran of the Afghan Campaigns. I served as a medical officer. At the dreadful battle of Maiwand I took one in the leg, or maybe it was the shoulder. I can never remember.”

I stared at him, half in anger and half in disbelief. He had taken my service record and appropriated it for himself.

He laughed. “Oh come, come, Watson. I have heard all of your stories from your time in the service often enough to repeat them by heart. I did not have long to chat, but I could match the others, war story for war story. For which, my dear

friend, I most sincerely thank you. Did I ever tell you about my miserable journey on the troop ship? The *Orentes*, I believe she was called.” He laughed again.

“This evening I shall attend a duly called meeting of the esteemed Club, wherein I shall be welcomed, and then shall participate in the planning of their weekend outing – a joyful armada to the Peak District. What think you, Watson?”

I shook my head in wonder. “Holmes, you never cease to surprise me. Oh well, then, what of your list of suspects and their potential victims? Any progress on that front?”

Now he became serious. “No, my friend. Holder gave me all the names he had in the file and some quite good notes on which points they might be vulnerable to blackmail. But none leapt to the fore the way the noble Hairbrains did. Now, that is not to say they are in any way to be respected. Frankly, they are a rather rum lot and all interconnected, inter-married, hopelessly consanguinized, if that is a word. They all belong to the same clubs, all attend the same churches, although I imagine the Lord God would be happier if they just stayed home. Their children all go to the same schools, and their sons all belong to the same troop of Boy Scouts. They all have more money than you and I could ever ask or imagine. And they are all paying stipends all over the place to make sure that people keep their mouths shut. Oh, I almost forgot – they are all very noble.”

I was tempted to comment that my friend was becoming somewhat cynical, except, of course, that he had been that way since I met him over twenty-five years ago.

“There is,” Holmes continued, “another event taking place, quite soon. This morning, in fact, that I would welcome your accompanying me too.”

“And what might that be?”

“An athletic event. A qualifying track and field event for both men and ladies. I have learned that our duplicitous Miss Holder is participating and I believe that observing her might be useful.”

“If I were free, Holmes, I most certainly would. But I fear it would make me late for my appointments with my patients.”

“Oh good heavens, Watson. You are a doctor. Your profession is the master at making people wait. None of your devoted patients will be kept for more than an hour and they will all be thinking that you must be doing something frightfully important, as all doctors are always doing in similar circumstances.”

“Holmes, I object. Even if some members of my profession are not the most considerate of the time of others I, however, try my very best to be so.”

He smiled. “I know you do, my friend. But if I were to suggest that we ride Norton, and that I would speed you back as soon as our young athlete’s race is over, might I tempt you? Norton and I will do everything in our power to have you back no more than fifteen minutes late. And look, you still have your splendid new boots on. See you on the bike, old boy. And do bring your binoculars.”

Chapter Six

Run For Your Life



The event was being held just around the corner in Regent's Park, and Holmes did an extra loop around the Outer Circle Road at high speed just to compensate me for my being manipulated one more time. We parked the bike and found a shady spot under a tree on the far side of the track.

"I think it best," said Holmes, "that we not be seen and recognized. So please just use your binoculars and look across the way. Do you see three motorcycles approaching?"

"I do. There appear to be three chaps driving and a woman holding on behind one of them. Is that who I think they are?"

Holmes was peering at them as well. "The two on their own are the Holder lads. The tall one is Arthur, and the shorter one Eric. The third must be that George Burnwell chap, and that is Miss Mary Holder behind him."

I continued watching. "I have no expertise on motorcycles," I said. "However, they appear to have three different types. Is that so?"

"An excellent observation, Watson. Yes, Mr. Burnwell is on a Trusty Triumph, Eric Holder on the more expensive bike, a Norton, like ours, and Arthur is riding his thoroughbred, his custom designed Brough."

I saw the three of them arrive and dismount. Miss Holder walked quickly over to the small tent where, I assumed, she would change into her athletic costume. The man Holmes had identified as Eric Holder walked toward the bleachers.

George, at first, followed him and then halted, turned back and entered the same changing tent that the young lady had. I dropped my binoculars and stared with my eyes to make sure I had not been deceived.

“A bit of a risqué cad,” observed Holmes.

“Extremely inappropriate,” I added.

The tall lad, Arthur, had not moved away toward the stands and was still standing by his motorcycle. A small crowd of admirers had gathered around him and were ogling the Brough. He appeared to be enjoying the attention.

Fortunately, the women’s events were first on the schedule, and it was no more than twenty minutes before the five-mile race was called. Holmes confirmed that this was Miss Holder’s event. I watched as a dozen young women walked toward the starting line. All of them were wearing athletic shorts and singlets and all were lithe with, I could not help but notice, well-defined calf and hamstring muscles.

“Which one is she?” I asked Holmes.

“The tallest blonde,” he answered while looking at them through his field glasses. “She is wearing a number five on her back. The girl from Kenya is the one to beat.”

The group of young women spread out along the starting line. I counted ten of them. We were too far away to hear the vocal instructions called, but the starter’s pistol was unmistakable. Off they went. They had a full twenty laps to run and they were pacing themselves accordingly, but none was dawdling. I did not have a stopwatch with me, but I estimated that the first lap was covered in about seventy seconds. They would do well if they could keep up that pace.

With each passing lap, the runners spread out a little more. After ten laps there were three who were quite clearly in front of the rest. One was a tall, dark-skinned young woman, the runner from Kenya. The second was a red-haired lass who looked as Irish as the day is long. And the third was our long-legged blonde, Miss Holder. The three of them kept

exchanging places as each tried but could not stay in front of the other two. By lap number seventeen the pace had picked up and I could see the pain on their faces. The cool of the early morning had passed and all of the runners were sweating profusely. As they turned and entered the eighteenth lap, they were giving it all they had. They were no longer just running, they were beginning to sprint.

Then, in a blur of bodies, I watch as the dark-skinned girl and the Irish lass simultaneously altered their positions, one moving to the outside and the other to the inside. As they did this, there was a collision of bodies. The Irish girl and the Kenyan both staggered but kept their balance and regained their stride. No so for Miss Holder. She went for a tumble and fell face first into the grass beside the track. Six other runners who had been behind her, passed her. I gasped and was about to express my shock and sadness for her, assuming that her chance of qualifying had just been destroyed when she sprung back to her feet and re-entered the race. She was no longer merely running. She was pumping her arms and legs as if she were in the hundred yard dash. Through my binoculars, I could see her face. Her eyes were wide, her mouth was open.

“Good Lord, Holmes, she’s running like a wild animal. She does not want to lose this race.”

Holmes nodded and kept his gaze fixed on the runners. Mary Holder soon caught up to the runner who was trailing in eighth place, then she passed the one in seventh. By part way into the final lap, she was running third, a full twenty yards behind the front two. They had turned their heads and had seen her catching up to them and had also begun to sprint toward the finish line.

“Would I be inexcusably misogynist, Watson, if I said that they run like young men and not like girls?” said Holmes.

“Yes.”

The three front runners were now within fifty yards of the finish line. The Irish lass was giving it all she had but was

beginning to fade. Mary Holder passed her and closed in on the Kenyan girl. It looked as if they passed the finish line together, after which both of them staggered and collapsed on the grass. Miss Holder's three motorcycle-riding friends dashed across the track and helped her to her feet. She fell into the arms of George, and then put one arm each around the shoulders of her brothers and walked over to the judges' table. She was having trouble walking and I could see the look on her face. She had an immense capacity for self-discipline. I thought she would have been all smiles and beaming with pride. Her face, even at a distance seen through the field glasses said, "I should have won."

Miss Holder did not win. That honor went to the Kenyan. Miss Holder came a very respectable second; enough to qualify for the national team. The small crowd gave all the runners a warm round of applause.

"I promised," said Holmes, "to get you back to your patients promptly. So let us be on our way." He was walking back toward the motorbike.

I agreed and then asked what to me was an obvious question. "So, pray tell, Holmes. What was the purpose of watching Miss Holder run a race? You already knew that she was a capable and determined athlete."

Yet again he looked at me with the inevitable smile of friendly condescension. "We did not come to watch Miss Holder run a race."

"Ah," I said. "We came to watch something else. Miss Holder and the two brothers, and Mr. Burnwell?"

"Precisely."

"And what we saw was that she has an appropriate friendly connection to her step-brothers and a very close romantic connection to Mr. Burnwell. Is that correct, Holmes?"

"Precisely."

Holmes deposited me at my medical office and once again I struggled to give my patients my undivided

attention and to keep my mind from wandering off to the most recent and puzzling set of events.

I returned to Baker Street at the end of the day, had supper alone, and decided to wait up until Holmes returned.

I had just finished my tea when the clock marked the eleventh hour of the evening and I heard Holmes ascending the stairs. He entered, acknowledged me with a nod, and proceeded straight to his room. I was temporarily fit to be tied and more than a little put out by his ignoring me. However, he returned in less than five minutes minus his borrowed wig, mustache, and sideburns. He walked over to the mantle, opened the decanter of brandy and poured us both one.

"Well then," I asked. "How was the meeting of Beryl Bikers? Fascinating conversations about carburetors, and suspensions, and valves, and torque and mudguards, no doubt."

Holmes laughed and shook his head. "Nothing of the kind. The entire group were all dressed as common loafers, deliberately no doubt, pretending to be perfect examples of the working class. They were merely a gaggle of veterans who chatted and swore and told vulgar stories before the meeting was called to order. And then they spent the next two hours arguing about the details of their upcoming outing this weekend. And, my word, they were worse than a group of nattering old ladies. They argued about whether we should stop at this pub or that pub, because this pub had a better ale but that pub was a tuppence cheaper; and should we have hard boiled eggs for lunch, or should they be pickled; and should we have bully beef from cans, or should it be fresh; and if it was to be fresh should it be kept on ice, and if so who would get the ice and which butcher should we buy from. I must say, Watson, I thought I had wandered into a meeting of the Ladies' Auxiliary of the local village Methodist Church. I was ready to jump to my feet and tell these silly blokes that what every one of them really needed

was a wife, who would just pack them a lunch and kick them out of the house.

“Other than all that nonsense I was pleased to learn that we are going on an overnight to the Peak District, staying at a campsite as if we were a bunch of Boy Scouts, and we could go bathing in the cool waters of the little lake, and sit around a campfire swapping stories. Because the dryness of the fields and woods we would have to be exceptionally careful with our tobacco but, if very careful, we could enjoy it together as we sat under the moon and the stars. I wish you could come with me, Watson, but I fear that won’t do.”

“It is quite all right, Holmes. You may recall that I went camping in the past – lived in a tent and ate my food while sitting on the ground outdoors. It lasted for over two years and we called it the Afghan Campaign. Had enough of it to last a lifetime. You go and have a good time and tell me all about it. But I assume that you learned some more useful information than the merits of canned bully beef.”

“I did indeed. When the meeting was over I sat at the bar and, feigning neediness as a new recruit, I asked the chatty chap behind the bar for his advice. Bartenders always love to give advice and he was full of it.”

“And what did you learn?”

“Oh, many things, most of which were meaningless. But I did ask him if there were any of the members that I should try not to cross. Not wanting to get in trouble or on the bad side of anyone. You know the type. There are a few in every group that are a must to avoid. Well then, that brought me a useful earful.”

“Aha,” I responded. “A few with criminal tendencies? That must have sparked your interest. Right, Holmes?”

“Quite so. The chap dropped his voice and leaned across the bar and he said told me that there were now some twenty chapters of the Beryl Bikers spread out across England and there were over two thousand members – all of whom were veterans of some sort. While they could be a bit

on the unusual side, as is common among veterans, he could safely vouch for one thousand, nine hundred and eighty of them. But there were some twenty of them – no more than one percent of the overall membership – who were doing some things that the law would not approve of.”

“Indeed?” I queried. “Enlighten me.”

“He was not overly specific. But he suggested that if I ever wanted to have a very young woman delivered to my door so that I could use her for illicit purposes, they would provide delivery and subsequent retrieval, for a price of course. Or if you wished to avoid paying customs and excise taxes on goods you were importing from the continent, they had the ability to have these goods unloaded at Tilbury and arrive at your doorstep the next day, with no records attached. They had gotten into the very lucrative business of either protecting you from your enemies, or, taking your shilling so to speak, and making life miserable for your enemies; beating them within an inch of their lives, or even murdering them. All for a price. And quite recently they had pulled off several kidnappings. You may remember last fall that the young son of Lord Bebington was taken right off of his school pitch and held for ransom.”

“Yes. Dreadful story. Didn’t they have to pay over ten thousand pounds to get the boy back?”

“Twelve thousand, if my memory serves me correctly.”

“Hmm,” I pondered. “Sounds to me like an excellent group to have nothing whatsoever to do with.”

“You are entirely correct, Watson. And I am going to do the exact opposite and attempt to find out who they are. Our client has been the victim of a crime and it appears to be closely tied to men on motorcycles, and this group, whoever they are, seem to be the most likely suspects. I have not yet eliminated all other possible alternatives, but other avenues of investigation are fading and this is certainly the most promising.”

“Very well, Holmes. And just how do you plan to gather data on a secretive group who are individually and severally a nasty piece of work?”

“The barman says that they are not as secretive as one might think. As is common among the criminal class they have a twisted sense of pride and want to be feared, if not respected. They have gone so far as to form their own inner circle of members and are calling themselves the *Beryl Anarchists*. Their badge of membership is a small human skull, cast in brass, with a real emerald beryl mounted on the forehead. While they wear their Beryl Biker badge pinned to the outside of their riding jackets, the skull is attached to the inside. They open their jackets to expose it when they speak to each other. All of which says to me that while they may be criminal, they are not the brightest lot I have ever locked horns with.”

“Very well, Holmes. So what happens now?”

“Now, my friend, we get a good night’s sleep.”

And that we did.

Until three o’clock in the morning, that is, when the phone rang. Being, as I have noted before, a light sleeper, I heard it and was awake and moving after the first ring.

“Hello, Watson,” said the voice on the other end.

“Lestrade here. I need to speak to Holmes.”

I fetched Holmes and watched as he listened to Inspector Lestrade. I could tell from his usually impassive face that the news was not good. In response to his gesture, I handed him a pencil and a pad of paper. He jotted down a name – *Atherley*. That name was familiar to my ears. I knew several but none that I could ever say anything against. I waited for Holmes to hang up.

“Lestrade is sending a car around in about fifteen minutes to take me over to Belgravia. You are welcome to join me.”

He knew I would, but I made a point of asking all the same. “Anybody I know?”

“One of our client’s clients. Earlier this evening a young woman, only a girl, was abducted on her way home from a Girl Guides meeting. The family received a ransom note along with very strict instructions not to contact Scotland Yard. The father, a rather tough sort, immediately called Mr. Holder, as he had been warned by Holder that his file had been stolen. Holder called the police and he himself came over immediately – they are neighbors – and suggested that I be called.”

A police car pulled up on Baker Street. The officer kindly ignored the bell and knocked quietly. Holmes and I descended the stairs in silence and climbed inside. The streets were empty, but the sky was cloudless, as it had been for weeks now and the bright half-moon combined with the streetlights to make the deserted city eerily luminescent. We made our way over to Park Lane and south into Belgravia, where the house, like many in that elegant neighborhood, was a three story white row building. With two police cars parked outside, it was easy to spot as we drove up.

We followed the police officer who was driving us to the door and we were welcomed quietly by Inspector Lestrade. Sitting in the parlor were a man and woman, whom I gathered were the parents of the abducted girl. The woman’s eyes were swollen and red and her face drawn and bloodless. I do not think I have seen such a deadly paleness in a woman’s face. The husband stood as we entered. Mr. Holder was also present, and likewise stood. There were two younger police officers and a middle-aged woman, who I took to be a police stenographer.

The room was large for a row house, and expensively furnished. On the wall were several paintings, all of scenes from places in the tropics, except for a print of a popular portrait of Queen Victoria. Mounted on the wall above them were several hunting trophies. A quick glance established that the Big Five – the lion, leopard, elephant, rhino and

Cape buffalo – were all accounted for, along with several ungulates.

Lestrade spoke to Holmes. “After all these years, Holmes, I should not be surprised to find your fingers all over this case. Since you are already up to your eyeballs in it, I thought we may as well get you over here.”

The inspector informed us of the events of the recent past. Miss Agatha Atherley, a “well-behaved but independent-minded” thirteen-year-old young lady, spent the early evening attending a meeting of her local Girl Guide troop, held at the St. Peter’s Church in Eaton Square, just three blocks from her home. Two of her friends told the police that, following the dismissal of the meeting, they saw her standing on the pavement beside Eaton Square, speaking to a man on a motorcycle. To their surprise, she climbed onto the back of the motorcycle and rode off with him. She failed to return to her home by 9:30 pm, and at 11:00 pm her mother called the police. Officers from Scotland Yard arrived at the home just before midnight and several police officers began to walk through the streets of Belgravia looking for her. At one o’clock in the morning, a knock was heard at the front door. When a maid opened the door, she found an envelope on the doormat and a motorcycle was seen turning at the street corner, some thirty yards away.

There was a note inside the envelope, which Lestrade handed to Holmes, who then handed it to me. I read it and returned it to Holmes, who immediately began to examine it using his powerful magnifying glass.

It was typed and ran as follows:

Should you ever wish to see your daughter alive again you must pay us £8,842 by tomorrow evening. Confirm that you will do so by a notice in the agony column of The Telegraph. Designate for May-Bel. Then await further instructions.

"Speak up, Holmes," said Lestrade. "I did not call you over here to sit and cogitate. Before you ask, I can tell you that the sum demanded corresponds exactly to the balance in the Atherley account at Holder and Stevenson."

"Such a curious coincidence," said Holmes. "You have, I am sure, some standard procedures for responding to kidnappers. We need time and some way to force continuing communication. A notice stating that the terms are agreeable but that two days are needed to secure the funds would be a normal place to start."

"Out of the question." This response came not from Lestrade but from the girl's father.

All of us turned and looked at Mr. Atherley.

"Really, sir," said Lestrade, "what Mr. Holmes has said is indeed our standard practice. Right now, time is not on our side and we need to negotiate for more of it. Saying that the demands will be met and then stalling is the only way we have of making sure that your daughter remains alive. An outright refusal is likely to bring unpleasant results. Unless, of course, you are in a position to pay the ransom."

Now Mr. Holder spoke. "Sufficient funds are immediately available. I cannot avoid my responsibility in this matter and the Bank shall accept whatever financial burden we have to bear."

"Sir," said Lestrade. "That is very honorable of you. However, we advise you not to follow that course. Doing so will not bring an end to crimes like this. It will only prove to these criminals that their scheme has worked and they will do it again and again. No child will be safe afterward. So again, I suggest that we find a way to extend the deadline."

Mr. Atherley spoke again in a sharp tone. "There will not be one farthing of ransom paid, and there will be no negotiations."

I looked at the man in surprise. He was not looking at any of us when he spoke. His gaze was elevated and fixed at

some point on his wall, part way between Queen Victoria and the horn of the Black Rhino.

"Pardon me, Mr. Atherley," said Lestrade. "We are not asking you to give into their demands, only to agree to negotiate for time so that we have some chance of rescuing your daughter."

"I said there will be no negotiations."

"I am sorry sir," said Lestrade quite forcefully. "I must ask you to explain yourself. We have had to handle similar situations in the past and I can assure you that negotiating for more time has proven to be an absolutely necessary response."

Again the reply was addressed to the Queen and the Rhino. "The British Empire did not become the great force for good in the world by negotiating with criminals. There is never a necessary response other than standing your ground and fighting. If the enemy wins the first round, then you regroup and engage him again and again until he is demolished. That, gentlemen, is why there will be no negotiations."

"Jack," came the imploring voice of the girl's mother. "She's our only child. The bank will pay the money."

"Silence, Cecilia," barked the father. "Every unit has to be willing to take casualties. Ours is no exceptions. Fortunately, Bernardo's is chock full of bright young adoptable lads, so children can always be replaced. The honor of and respect for the British Empire cannot."

Here Holmes could no longer hold his tongue. "For heaven's sake man, you are not the British Empire. You are merely one family and you have one child and she cannot be replaced. The British Empire is not about to collapse because you use your common sense."

Mr. Atherley glared at Holmes, who coolly returned his stare.

"I will not," exploded Atherley, "be lectured to by a detective-for-hire. Mr. Holmes, you are dismissed from this

case and dismissed from this house.”

“No,” came the loud, immediate response from Lestrade, “he is not. He is assisting in this case at the request of Scotland Yard. This is now a police matter and you, sir, have no authority. Furthermore, if he is requested by Scotland Yard to examine every minute aspect of your existence then he will, by law, do that, and you, sir, will cooperate. That, sir, is an order.”

The tension in the room was palpable and I made a note in my mind to remember this occasion when Lestrade stood up for Holmes. Atherley clenched his fists and seemed about to burst with rage. Forcing the words through his teeth, he said, “We will see about that.”

Lestrade turned to Holmes. “Perhaps we could continue our conversation on the front steps.” He turned and the four of us, including Mr. Holder, moved toward the door.

“Inspector,” came a request from Mrs. Atherley. “May I speak with you?” She rose and started to follow us out.

“Cecilia!” shouted Mr. Atherley, “get back here. This instant!”

The lady stopped, closed her eyes, took a slow breath, turned her head back toward her husband, and quietly but firmly replied. “Mister Atherley, go to hell.” She resumed her exit from her home.

“Gentlemen,” she said. “My family has more than sufficient funds to serve as the basis of negotiations and payment with whoever is holding my daughter. Please, I beg you, use your best judgment and do everything you possibly can to find her ... and spare no expense.” She turned back toward her door, and took another deep breath.

“Mrs. Atherley,” said Holmes in soothing tones that he knew so well how to employ. “Would it be helpful to you if a police officer remained posted at your home? I believe Inspector Lestrade could look after that for you. Is that not correct, Inspector?”

Lestrade gave a hint of a smile back at Holmes. "That would be quite in order. I could demand that he be posted in the parlor if the lady does not object."

"That, gentlemen, would be very helpful. Thank you for your thoughtfulness."

Lestrade walked her back to her door and sent one of his officers in with her before returning to chat with Holmes. He was shaking his head as he walked.

"Sometimes ... sometimes ..." he mused, "I wonder if protecting our citizens from their own stupidity is worth it. Sorry about that, Holmes. However ... your thoughts? Can you use your skills in unraveling the matter? Anything?"

"A few observations, but pray tell me, Mr. Holder, is there any reason why this client should have been singled out? Lord and Lady Hairball I can understand, but why these people?"

"None," replied Holder. "Their wealth is significant but not exceptional. The husband has been very demanding concerning the secrecy of his accounts, but the only reason I could ever see is that he does not want it known that whatever money he has came from his wife and not from his own efforts. Beyond that, nothing."

"Did you," asked Lestrade of Holmes, "see anything in the note?"

Holmes nodded back at him. "The quality of paper was quite good; the type only available at a high-end shop. So it was not likely sent by a lower class type of criminal. Every typewriter has a distinctive font and this one was from a recent Remington model. The letters were all dark and without any parts not fully filled, indicating a fresh new ribbon. On the bottom of the back was a small black smudge that I at first thought must have come from the ribbon but on closer glance was from grease, of the type used to lubricate an engine. There was also a very faint scent of perfume, Guerlain's *L'Heure Bleue*, I believe, suggesting that a woman's hand had at least touched the paper and

envelope. Beyond that, I cannot honestly say that I noticed anything."

"Not a bad start ... for an amateur detective," said Lestrade, his head ever so slightly cocked. "I will have our office place a notice in the *Telegraph's* agony column along the lines you suggested. Beyond that, I can only say that I will keep you informed and I expect the same in return."

"Understood and agreed," replied Holmes.

Chapter Seven

An Everyday Burglary in Southwark



Upon returning to Baker Street, Holmes said to me, "My dear doctor, thank you for your support and company. I am aware that you have patients to attend to in a few hours and I suggest you get some sleep."

"And will you, my friend, do the same?"

"Perhaps ... but not likely."

I took myself off to bed and did manage to catch a few hours of sleep, interrupted only briefly just before six o'clock by the sound of a motorcycle just below our front window. I could tell it was Holmes starting up. I heard it drive south on Baker Street and fade in the distance.

At the end of the day, I came back and dined alone on a pleasant piece of pork tenderloin that Mrs. Hudson had dutifully prepared. Just before my retiring to my bedroom for the night, Holmes reappeared. I could tell by the speed at which he ascended the stairs and his energetic entry that he was hot on a trail.

"Wonderful, Watson. I was hoping you would still be up."

"I can tell you are on to something, Holmes. So, out with it."

"My good doctor, I am in need of your cooperation."

"I shall be delighted."

"You don't mind breaking the law?"

"Not in the least."

"Nor running a chance of arrest?"

"Not in a good cause."

"Oh, the cause is excellent!"

"Then I am your man."

"I was sure that I might rely on you. You will need some dark clothing and a torch. Best bring your service revolver as well. And your stethoscope, if you don't mind."

"And where are we off to?" I asked.

"Southwark."

"And to do what?"

"A very common unimaginative everyday burglary. Nothing more."

"Give me two minutes."

He insisted on my accompanying him on his expedition, which I was eager to do. I dressed as requested and stuffed a torch into one pocket and my gun into another. We found a cab on Baker Street and took it as far as the Elephant and Castle. Holmes gave me some information as we rode.

"I spent tea time and the early evening at my motorcycle club. I kept looking for one of the chaps bearing the skull and emerald badge inside his riding jacket. I noticed one of them and then followed him all the way here after he left Fitzrovia. There is converted garage behind Hayles Street that our Beryl Anarchists are using as their own clubhouse and I fully expect that we will find some excellent data concerning them when we make ourselves at home there."

We got out and continued on foot. As we entered the lane, Holmes grabbed my wrist and I stopped moving.

"Ah yes," he said. "It looks like that last one of them is leaving and locking up. He will get on his machine and be gone in a moment." We waited until a man on a motorcycle had departed at the far end of the lane, and we quietly walked toward the garage. A hand-painted sign over the front door read *Welcome to Ladysmith*.

"This will not take long," said Holmes as he squatted down in front of the keyhole. Within a few seconds, he opened the door and we entered. The place had a strong and unpleasant odor to it; a sort of mixture of mildew, stale beer, fish and chip wrappings, and unwashed men. There

was some light coming through the window and in the front room I could see several large sofas, all in various states of disrepair, with the upholstery worn and the padding protruding. In the back room were a desk and chairs, as one might see in an office of a very poor enterprise. There was a typewriter on the desk. In the poor light, I could still see that it was a Remington.

"Please, Watson, draw the curtains before turning on your torch. This will take us a bit longer."

I did as requested and, for the next few minutes, Holmes opened drawers and files and inspected their contents. He selected a number of documents and placed them inside his satchel.

"These will all be useful to Lestrade – membership lists, meeting minutes and the like, but not what I was hoping to find."

"Holmes, you might want to take a look in the corner."

He glanced in the direction I was indicating with my torch. I had spotted a small safe, about two feet in height, with a combination lock dial on the front.

"How very observant, Watson. Thank you. And your stethoscope, if I may?"

For the next ten minutes, I held the torch, shielding the light so that it was restricted to a small beam focused on the dial. Holmes spun the dial several times and then held the medical instrument to the metal plate beside it as he slowly and gingerly turned the dial first one way and then the next. On three occasions he thought he had it, and attempted to lower the handle, but to no avail. He muttered a few mild expletives indicating his frustration but eventually the levered handle gave way and the door swung open.

"Ha. Those boys at Chubb are intent on making me work for my fee. Oh, do you see what I see?"

I could not, as the safe door had opened in my direction and I could not see through steel plate. "No Holmes, I cannot see what you see. What is in there?"

He placed both hands into the safe and brought out a stack of about a dozen files and handed them to me. He repeated the task until I was holding a foot tall stack of files.

"Watson, our client will be relieved. I will wager a fiver that these are his purloined files."

"A bet I will decline to place," said I. "Well done, Holmes."

"Yes, we have found our hidden treasure. Come now, let us get back to Baker Street where we can inspect our mother lode."

Before rising to his feet, Holmes stretched his arm all the way to the back of the safe and brought out a canvas sack. I could tell by the shape and sound that it was full of small metallic objects. He handed it to me and I undid the drawstring. Using my torch, I looked inside and saw, at least, a score of medallions, all in the shape of a human skull and all enhanced by a bright emerald beryl in the middle of the forehead. I looked at one closely and shuddered. It struck me as a symbol of unspeakable evil.

"What," I asked, whispering, "are you going to do with these?"

"If the emeralds are genuine, then they are quite valuable," he replied.

"Then taking them," I replied, "would amount to larceny."

"Only," said Holmes, "if they are reported as stolen. So we shall be guilty of nothing except failing to adhere to honor among thieves."

He stuffed the sack into his now bulging satchel.

We walked quietly back to the Elephant and Castle and hailed a cab. As we were approaching 221B Baker Street, I chanced to look out and saw that there was a light in the window of our front room.

"Holmes," I said, "did you, perchance, leave the light in the front room on as we departed?" I asked this knowing that he most certainly did not, as he was inclined by habit to penny pinching and hated the waste of the recently installed electricity.

"You know I did not," he replied, but the words had a vacant tone to them as he was leaning forward so that he too could observe our window.

I further noticed when we reached our door that a police car was parked immediately in front of it. I had an uneasy feeling. A police car at your door after ten o'clock in the evening does not augur well.

As we entered our staircase, Mrs. Hudson appeared at the top. She said nothing but just nodded toward the front room. Her face conveyed deep distress. Sitting in our room, was Inspector Lestrade and, opposite him, a portly man who was leaning forward with his face buried in his hands. By his size and the quality and cut of his clothes, it was our client, Mr. Holder.

Lestrade turned to us as we entered. "Here. I brought copies for both of you. Read the afternoon edition first." He handed each of us a section from the afternoon and the evening editions of the *Telegraph*. They were both opened and folded back to the agony columns. Items had been circled in pen. The first one, in the afternoon edition, ran:

Dear Mommy and Daddy May-Bel:

Funds must be sent or they will make me a very unhappy girl. I know you have enough, so please send if you do not want me to be miserable. Your loving daughter, A.A.

In the evening edition, there were two items circled. The first, which I gathered had been placed by Scotland Yard, ran:

Dear May-Bel: Prepared to meet demands but more time is required to assemble all funds without raising concerns amongst those who you do want to be concerned. Will comply within seventy-two hours. Mommy and Daddy May-Bell.

We had not expected the message sent under the name of the daughter, but the note prepared by the Yard was as I would have anticipated. Further down the page, a second note caused my eyes to widen and my mouth to drop open in disbelief. It ran:

Attention May-Bel cowards and traitors. Disregard all other messages. No payments. No negotiations. Not now. Never. And go to hell. Father and only authorized contact, May-Bel.

“That imbecile!” cried Holmes. “That pig-headed, stiff-necked imbecile. How can he possibly be so stupid? Has he no sense whatsoever of the consequences for his daughter. Lestrade, can you get a message into the first morning edition countermanding this fool? There should be time if you move immediately.”

Lestrade looked up at Holmes and quietly shook his head. In a voice just above a whisper, he said, “Too late. It’s too late to alter the matter now.”

“Oh no,” said Holmes. “Oh dear God, no.” He slowly sat down and quietly inquired. “What happened?”

Mr. Holder raised his head out of his hands. His face was fixed with a look of grief and despair. “We are dealing, sir, with monsters. Evil, depraved monsters, without heart or conscience. The child was murdered. She was ... ” He could say no more. He choked on his words and his face contorted in pain. He dropped his head back into his hands and his whole body shook with spasms of grief. Lestrade picked up the conversation.

“About ninety minutes ago the Atherley house received a phone call. Mrs. Atherley answered it. A man’s voice said, ‘Look on your front step’ and immediately hung up. She did so and came upon the decapitated head of her child looking up at her. The dismembered arms were reaching toward her

and in the hands was a copy of the notice that had been placed in the afternoon edition. A few minutes later Mr. Holder also received a phone call with similar instructions. On his front steps was the torso of the child. It was naked and had signs of having been tortured. One of the legs had been cut off. We have not yet had any report of its being found."

I gasped. "What sort of depraved monster ... good lord, who could have done this?"

Lestrade nodded. "We do not know, but everything we do know about horrors like this tells us that it will not stop here. He, or maybe they, will strike again." He then looked directly at Sherlock Holmes. "Holmes, you know that many times in the past you have infuriated me by using methods that Scotland Yard is not allowed to touch. So let me be quite blunt. I will deny that I ever said this to you but anything you can do, using whatever methods you want, are desperately needed. Do not tell me how you did it, just help us stop this evil and do it quickly. Is that understood, Holmes?"

Holmes nodded in response. "Precisely."

"I know," said Lestrade, "that it is late, but I am on my way to the morgue. I suggest you come with me."

Holmes rose but before departing opened his satchel and extracted the stack of files we had collected earlier in the evening. He handed them to Mr. Holder. "At this point, I know these will be cold comfort to you. But nevertheless, they are what you hired me to find and return to you."

Holder looked at them, amazed. "I do thank you. I had thought when these were stolen that nothing worse could ever happen in my life. I was wrong."

"And just how," said Lestrade, "did you find those and get them back?"

Holmes made no reply and only looked back at Lestrade impassively.

“Right,” said Lestrade. “I just told you not to tell me how you did it.”

“Right,” agreed Holmes. The three of them then departed down the stairs and left me alone to contemplate the depths of evil and depravity that could take over the souls of men.

Chapter Eight

The Northumberland Fusiliers



I slept poorly that night and the following day had to consume several cups of coffee in order to be sufficiently alert to attend to my patients. The hot spell of weather still had not broken and I trudged slowly back to Baker Street, with my jacket draped over my arm and my collar loosened. The news of the terrible crime of the previous evening was in the press and all over the news posters. Even the *Times* carried it on the front page. The more sensationalist papers had printed sketches of how they imagined, in the most twisted and perverted manner, the kidnapping, torture and dismemberment of the poor young girl might have taken place. By the time I arrived at our door, I was weary, with a lethargy in both body and soul.

Our dear Mrs. Hudson greeted me and went off immediately to the icebox to get me a glass of cold water. Holmes was sitting in his chair reviewing some files that looked as if they had been sent over from Scotland Yard.

"How are you getting on? Any news?" I asked as I collapsed into my familiar armchair.

"A significant alteration in the tactics of our enemy, or enemies."

"In what way?"

"Their attempt to use embarrassing confidential information to blackmail a wealthy family came to naught. It now appears that they have switched to extortion and are using the murder of the Atherley girl to threaten the rest of the families with similar horrors to their children if they do

not pay over all of the cash sitting in their accounts at Holder and Stevenson. It is possible that these criminals may have made copies of the information in the files before we removed them, though I think it more likely that they hatched this plot earlier in the day and used the Atherley family as an example to prove how cruel they could be.”

“Have all of those families been threatened?” I asked.

“No. Only those who have children who are ever likely to be moving outside of the home and more easily trapped and kidnapped.”

“Are they taking measures to protect them?”

“Yes, with Scotland Yard’s help they have all hired private security. There are some quite capable retired Royal Marines now busy watching over schoolboys and girls. However, a number of the lads, about a dozen of them, are members of the May-Bel Boy Scout troop and they are all away camping for the fortnight up in the Peak District, so a small group of former marines has been dispatched to join them at their campsite. The marines are formidable chaps, and very diligent. They know what sort of monster or monsters they are up against and will, I am sure, provide a strong line of defense.”

I reflected for a moment. “The Peak District, you say? Is that not where your motorcycle club is having their outing? Is that just a coincidence?”

“On more occasions that either you or I can count, Watson, I have repeated my old maxim, that when all other possibilities have been eliminated the only one remaining, however, improbable must be the truth.”

“You have said that, indeed, Holmes. And yes, many times.”

“The great frustration with this case,” he continued, “is that it has been, so far, impossible to eliminate the possibilities. All of our suspects are, to one extent or other, still in play. It may be entirely a coincidence that the Beryl Bikers, including the criminals amongst them, the self-

appointed Anarchists, are off to the Peak District, but there is no conclusive data that yet allows me to reach that conclusion.”

“So what are you going to do?”

“I am going camping.”

I said nothing. The very thought of Sherlock Holmes, now fifty-seven years of age, on bivouac, crawling into a tent and rolling out his blanket, deprived of his Persian slipper of tobacco, his brandy, and his finely poached salmon, struck me as ludicrous. Unfortunately, Holmes read my thoughts.

“Enough, Watson. Enough. It is only for a weekend. I shall survive. And the weather in the Peaks will be blessedly cooler. I might even enjoy the experience.”

I could not resist giving him a sideways look.

“Or I might not,” he admitted. “While I am away there is a task that I must ask you to undertake.”

“Please ask, I am not likely to refuse.”

“Several strands of data from this case all appear to be connected back to the war in South Africa. Some days back I noted that your connection to the same regiment as the Holder boys might prove useful. Could I ask of you the favor of heading off on Saturday morning – if you leave early it will not be unbearably hot – to your regimental club and attempting to glean whatever information you can about the Holders and their time in the Cape?”

My old regiment, the Fifth Regiment of Foot, known now as the Northumberland Fusiliers, was garrisoned in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. I had no intention of traveling all that distance in the miserable hot weather, but over half a century ago some of the retired officers had set up a club in London. It was not in the poshest neighborhood, mind you, but a pleasant place all the same, just north of Oxford Street in Fitzrovia.

Holmes departed for his camping expedition on Friday evening. I helped him bundle up whatever kit I thought

useful, as he had no idea about these things. For good measure, I added a torch, a set of binoculars, and a flask of coffee. I cut a slice of beef from the joint upon the sideboard, sandwiched it between two rounds of bread, and thrust this rude meal into his pocket before he started upon his journey.

As the next day was a Saturday, I expected that the club would be active with all those chaps whose wives had shooed them out of the house, and these old boys were always a reliable source of historical data and priceless gossip. I rose early and in the cool of the morning walked over to the club, arriving in time for breakfast. I did not frequent the club often. I had no interest in keeping fresh my memories of my time in the Second Anglo-Afghan Campaign. I would have preferred to forget those days completely. I feared that some of the veterans might take umbrage with my having ignored them but, to my surprise, I was welcomed as a prodigal son. While the regiment had been awarded many military honors, those who graduated from it and went on to become successful and somewhat famous authors, as I had done, were few. Thus, I was greeted warmly.

I had learned from Sherlock Holmes that patience and cheerfulness is a sure, even if slow way of extracting information, even of the most sensitive variety. So for the next few hours, over warm beer, cold lemonade, pickled eggs and sausages I made jovial conversation, recounted a few of my war stories and laughed and marveled at those I listened to. When appropriate I steered the conversation toward the events of the Boer War and, in as offhand a way as I could, asked about Messrs Holder and Holder. I was not learning much and feared that I would bring a brief and disappointing report back to Holmes, when a chap came and sat down beside me. He was in his forties and I assumed that he had likely served in South Africa. He placed a fresh beer in front of me, smiled and said some pleasant things about my stories in *The Strand*. Then he looked me straight in the

eye and quietly spoke. "We have not met, Dr. Watson. My name is Greenhalgh. At one time it was Major Greenhalgh. I served in the war but have been a barrister ever since returning. Would you mind terribly if I asked you some impertinent questions?"

"You outrank me, Major, so you can be as impertinent as you wish. Charge ahead."

"I have been watching you, doctor, for the past two hours. You chat, and ask questions, and then you excuse yourself saying that you have to use the loo and as you do you remove your notepad from your pocket. I see you returning it to your pocket on your way back to your table. Would I be close to the truth if I were to think that you did not come here at all to renew old friendships and listen to worn out stories, but that you are gathering information for your colleague, Sherlock Holmes? Hmmm? And that you have a specific interest in the Holder boys? And that there is some reason for your doing so, and that it is not a particularly happy one? Otherwise, why would our most famous detective be interested? Might I be on the right track, doctor, if I were thinking that way?"

I felt my cheeks burn with embarrassment as he spoke. "I fear you have discovered me, sir. Mr. Holmes did indeed send me on a reconnaissance mission. I guess you might have to call me a spy. And yes, Major, you are on exactly the right track."

He smiled and leaned closer to me. "There is a quiet place back behind the billiard table. What say we go there and chat? I may be able to help you ... and Mr. Sherlock Holmes."

He rose and I followed him to a place where we could talk without being overheard.

"My purpose," I said, "in coming here is to learn as much as I can about the young men you just identified. I gather that you knew Arthur and Eric Holder during the war?"

“And after the war as well. Lieutenants Holder and Holder and their friend, George Burnwell, fought in the siege of Ladysmith in the early days and did quite well. Brave lads, or, at least, that is what my friend and fellow major – John was his name – says about them. He was their commanding officer at that time. Then after Kitchener arrived several units of the regiment were transferred to looking after the refugee camps. Major John was put in command of camp number 42. I was given the supply side and looked after getting food, and necessities to all the inmates. Officially we called them refugees but in truth they were prisoners. Thousands of women, children, and elderly men were rounded up and interred. It was not a pleasant two years. When I returned home, I left the service. I had come into a bit of money, and I sought out Mr. Alexander Holder. He already had a name as the most capable and trusted of private bankers, and as I knew his sons and was from the same regiment, he took me on as a client. I have kept contact with him since that time, so have also learned a bit about what has happened to his sons.”

“Before you get ahead of yourself,” I said, endeavoring to sound him upon a point. “Please, tell me first about their time during the war. Was there ever any indication that they might, in their future lives, not entirely walk the straight and narrow?”

The major took a slow draft of his beer and then set it back down on the table. “Let us just say that it is not a surprise to me that Sherlock Holmes is looking into something in which these lads are involved.”

“Pardon me, major,” I replied. “But that just will not do. You cannot lay a card like that on the table and not have another one in your hand to play.”

He took another slow draft. “The Holder boys pushed the limits of what was permitted but only ever in good sport, never anything that was mean-spirited, and never anything that could have them court-martialed. They were chatty

chaps, especially the stouter one. After a few beers or a couple of rounds of whiskey they got a little on the talkative side. You know the type, I'm sure, doctor. Said a few things that they would not have said when they were sober."

"I know the type well. So, very well, sir. What did they say?"

"Some rather unpleasant things about their father. Not a lot of love lost between father and sons."

"I thought he was awfully generous with them and spoiled them constantly."

"Oh, that he did. But they held him responsible for the death of their mother. They made that right clear. Of course, they only said things when they were well into their cups, so no telling whether or not it was the truth."

"It is not without reason," I said, "that for a thousand years we have known *in vino veritas*."

"Right you are on that one, doctor. But there are many young men who are angry at their fathers and they still do not go doing anything illegal as a result. My sense of the Holder boys is that they would be more of that sort."

Here he paused and took another sip. Then another. I sensed he was waiting for me to speak.

"You have said nothing about this chap Burnwell. George. What about him?"

Another long slow sip. His posturing was becoming more than a little annoying. "George? Ah yes, George. Never a formal reprimand. Not a single blot on his escutcheon. He was too clever for that. But there was something about him that we did not trust. He was from old money as they say, but so old that it had run out, and George liked having money. The Holder boys were from new money, and so new that it was pouring in faster than dad could spend it. Now, as you know doctor, it is a poor thing in a regiment to flaunt your father's money. We are all equals and that's how a regiment builds its spirit. The Holders never let on that dad was a banker and swimming in filthy lucre. But we all knew,

and certainly George knew. We watched him and in many subtle and sly ways he ingratiated himself to the brothers, both of them. Soon we never saw them without him alongside. Now, of course, there is nothing wrong with a soldier, or any man for that matter, trying to make friends with those who have long purses and expensive habits. It is as near universal a practice as I can imagine. You would agree, would you not doctor?"

I wanted to scream "Yes! Now get on with it will you!" but I merely nodded.

"Well, George is also on the handsome side. A man of great personal beauty; a bloody Adonis he is, and keeps himself trim and his uniform spotless and always looks like he's ready for a full dress inspection. And he is charming, a man of evil reputation among women. Bloody well smooth as silk. We used to say he could charm the knickers off a nun. Or for that matter, off a priest, if he thought he could get something out of it. Whenever I spoke to him, he was always ready with a joke, a compliment, and thank you for whatever I had done. We chatted about all sorts of things, but after doing so for three years, I felt I did not know him at all. You know they type I mean, don't you doctor?"

I nodded. Then, since my patience was running out, I added, "and are you going to get around to saying anything about him that would be of interest to a detective whose province is criminal activity? Nothing you have said so far amounts to anything that would even give a bobby cause to give a warning. Just why did you say that you were not surprised that Sherlock Holmes had become involved?"

Yet another long sip on his beer. "There were hundreds of young women in the prisoner camps. They were all of Dutch stock, so many of them were blonde and very pretty. Now, we all knew that while it was quite acceptable for a British soldier to stand by and do nothing while children starve to death. However, if a private or even an officer dared lay a hand on a woman in an immoral way, well, he would be up

before a court martial the next day and likely as not shot by a firing squad and buried, and a box with his medals and ribbons sent off to his parents within a week. The rules about that sort of thing were very strict. But many of these women were desperate for money or extra rations, and the boys, well, boys will be boys, so prostitution took place in almost all of the camps. We could never pin anything on George Burnwell, but we all knew that he was the mastermind behind it. We questioned him, but he always had a ready alibi. We questioned his mates, but a soldier will never inform on another soldier on a matter like that. We questioned some of the women who we knew were selling themselves to the men, but when George's name came up, they went all silent and fearful and said not a word. My pal, Major John, who as I said was in charge of the camp, knew he had a very bad actor on his hands, and he built up an enormous hatred for George Burnwell. And George returned it in kind. By the time we all came home to England, John was ready to shoot the man. Probably would have if he could have gotten away with it.

"There were many incidents in which George was involved that sent John into a rage. The one I was close to took place on the fourth of April in 1903, the last year of the war. One of the young mothers, who we knew was gaining extra rations on the side, sent a message to my friend, Major John, and said she was ready to tell him all about the terrible misdeeds of George Burnwell. An appointment was set up for the next day. Well that night, around two o'clock in the morning, an alarm goes up from the far perimeter of the camp. Several of us went running over there on the double and with our torches we see Lieutenant Burnwell standing over the body of a young woman. She was trying to escape, he says. When I tried to stop her, he says, she came at me with a knife in one hand and a grenade in the other. I did the only thing I could and used my bayonet to defend myself, he says. Well now, in the light of a couple of torches we can see

that the woman is holding a knife and a grenade, and so no one can say that George is lying. So the woman's body is taken to the medical tent and the medic there does his examination and files his report informing us that she died from a stab wound to her chest. And, you might have guessed, doctor, the woman is the one who was due to meet with Major John the next day.

"Well John and I take the medic aside and cross question him very closely and he tells us that the cause of death was the wound to her chest that cut into her heart. But she had other wounds as well. There were shallow stab wounds to her breasts, and burns there as well that were of the type made by a lit cigarette. And there were also bayonet wounds to her abdomen and to her private parts. Her wrists bore scars as if she had been tied up. The medic said that in his opinion she had been tortured before she died.

"Well, John knows that he is sitting on a powder keg and so he writes it all up and grabs me to come along and we tear down to Pretoria to meet with Kitchener himself. His Lordship is already living with the report of Mrs. Hophouse, and the British press is calling him a butcher, and that Mr. Lloyd George has stood in the House of Commons and compared him to King Herod, who slaughtered the innocents. The last thing he needs is another story of one of his officers gone evil on him. So he reads the reports, says that all that can be known for certain is that the woman was outside the boundaries, had a knife and a grenade in her hands, and any other marks on her body could have come from anywhere. And we have the word of an Englishman that he fought her off in self-defense, and so he tells John to let it slide. The war will soon be over anyway, and we will be able to put all of this behind us.

"Well now, John is one tough soldier who believes in living by the rules, and in protecting the honor of his regiment and the good name of the British Empire. And he explodes on Lord Kitchener and uses some strong language

and calls him a bloody coward and a toady to the toffs in Westminster, and such like and so forth. Well now, Kitchener will have none of that and he has my friend thrown out of the BEF's Headquarters, and for good measure, he relieves him of his command, discharges him with a severe reprimand and cuts his pension. And two months later the war is over and we all come home. Now London may be the most populous city on earth but once you move into the ranks of former military officers, especially those whose families have some means, then it becomes a rather small village and everybody knows everybody. So John comes home and he puts the word out about George Burnwell and quietly lets anyone who will listen hear his story about the incident at the camp. So the word goes around and George Burnwell finds that, suave and charming though he may be, he is offered no position in any firm and not invited to all the best parties, and not even particularly welcome around here, his old regiment.

"Well now, that is what I know about George Burnwell. I had no idea what had become of him until a year ago when I am in the office of Alexander Holder and I see the two Holder brothers and with them is George Burnwell. I asked Alex what he was doing there, and he says that he gave Burnwell, at the request of his sons, a minor position with the bank, but says no more.

"So Doctor Watson, that is what you can now go and tell Mr. Sherlock Holmes. And you can add to it that, even if neither John nor I could ever prove anything against George Burnwell, he is a man who should be deeply distrusted. I would never trust him. Never."

With that he struck the table with his now empty beer glass, shattering it. He stared at the shards for a few seconds, and then rose and started to walk away from me. I had been scribbling notes as he spoke and reached out and grabbed his wrist before he departed.

“Please, Major. Just one piece I am wanting, and I am certain that Sherlock Holmes would not forgive me for missing it. Your friend, your fellow major, that fellow John. What was his family name?”

“Atherley. John Atherley,” he said and walked away.

Chapter Nine

Ride a Cock Horse



For a few seconds, I sat, unable to move. Then I jumped to my feet, knocking my chair over behind me. I moved quickly to the bar, impatiently paid my tab, and ran out the door. I knew I had to get to Holmes with what I had just learned and do so immediately. He was hours away, camping somewhere in the Peak District. I knew that even with good connections it would take me at least five hours to get from North London to Stockport, and then I would have to track him down in the park. I stood, frozen, trying to decide what shall I do.

As I was standing there, two chaps drove up into our small parking area on their motorcycles. From my very limited knowledge, I could tell that the larger bike was a Norton Big Four, the same as Holmes's. I hesitated for a moment, thinking to myself that I must have gone mad, and then strode over to the two of them as they were dismounting. I introduced myself to the fellow on the big Norton.

"Why sir," he replied, pulling off his helmet and goggles. "Of course, we know who you are. We are all right proud to know that the famous author of all those stories about Sherlock Holmes was a member of our regiment. An honor to meet you, sir." He removed his glove and pumped my hand.

"You look, sir, as if you're in need of something. How can I help you?"

I decided to be forthright. "I am assisting Sherlock Holmes on a terrible case, the murder of that young girl in Belgravia. I have an immediate need for a fast motorcycle for the remainder of the weekend. I will pay you fifty pounds if you will loan me yours, but I must have it straightaway."

He looked a little apprehensive, so I added. "And if your loan of it helps Sherlock Holmes solve this horrible crime then due credit will be given to you when the story appears in *The Strand*."

"How could I refuse," he said with a smile and handed me his key. "She's full of petrol so just bring her back here to the club when you're done. And godspeed. And by the by, my name is Tom Mulvaney. Captain Tom. But now I'm an electrician, so if anyone is looking for a good one, be sure to add that to your story."

"I will give you my word on that," I assured him. "But I must also ask you for the loan of your helmet, goggles, boots, and gloves."

Again he looked askance and gave me an eyeball. "Are you quite sure you remember how to ride one of these, doc?"

"I was on one just a few days back," I said, looking a little miffed that he would dare to ask such a question.

"Good on you then, doc."

He sat on the curb and pulled off his boots. I, in turn, pulled off my shoes, tossed them into the saddlebag, pulled on the boots and mounted the Big Four. As I rode away, I wondered what my patients would say if they could see me.

I made my way through the Saturday traffic up to Marylebone Road, headed west to Edgware Road and struck out for the north. I had only driven on one road before in my life and, fortunately, this was it. At least, it was for the first twenty minutes. Once past Hemel Hempstead, I was in *terra incognita* and vacillated between my need for speed and a nagging common sense that reminded me that I would do no one any good as a crippled ball in a ditch. So I gave

full bore on those sections that were clear and straight, and more caution as I rounded corners and passed through villages.

Ride a cockhorse to Banbury Cross ...

I passed through Aylesbury, then the cross at Banbury, and then took the road that allowed me to circumvent Birmingham. At Sudbury, I headed due north into the Peak District. The temperature fell somewhat as my altitude increased and my latitude declined. Occasionally, as I felt the wind racing past my face, and the sensation of power roaring underneath me, I allowed myself a moment of exhilaration and thought that this would be a splendid hobby to pursue on weekends. I even imagined my dear wife holding on behind me and shouting pleasant things into my ear. Then I came back to my senses and acknowledged that I was a fifty-nine-year-old doctor who had no business being on a horse or even a bicycle, let alone a powerful motorcycle. This outing to the Peaks was destined to be my first and last such venture.

When I reached Buxton, on the edge of the foothills of the Peaks, I stopped and asked about the invasion of motorcyclists that had passed the previous afternoon. The villagers knew exactly who I meant and assumed that I was a straggler belatedly catching up to my unit. They were all camped in a large private campground. Just keep going north, they told me, turn right at Chapel-en-le-Frith and then drive east to Hope. Cannot be missed, they assured me.

It was already dusk when I found the campground. At the entrance was a small shop and a pub. Outside of it was a new red telephone booth. It occurred to me that had I known that I could have just phoned and waited until the proprietor had gone and found Holmes and brought him to the phone. But it was too late for that.

The campground was full of men and women all eating and drinking and laughing. Some of the fellows had brought their wives; others, no doubt their mistresses; and those who

had neither must have rented a substitute for the weekend. I drove up and down the lanes until I spotted the massive Brough 1200 that could only belong to Arthur Holder. I was quite confident that Holmes would pitch his tent not too far away. As I was very unlikely to be recognized beneath a leather helmet and goggles, I walked up to a small group of men and women who were standing around the large bike. Arthur Holder was proudly holding forth. I interrupted the briefing and said that I was on an urgent family matter and could they tell me where an older fellow, riding a Big Four, and sporting a handlebar mustache, might be found.

"Oh," giggled on of the mildly intoxicated young women. "You must mean grandpa. We didn't think he was going to make it, but he did. We asked him to join us for a few rounds, but he tottered off and pitched his tent and must have fallen asleep. His spot is about five down the lane."

I thanked them and drove slowly. Again, I knew what I was looking for. I soon spotted it; a drooping tent, sloppily erected as if a lazy child, or, in this case, a weary middle-aged detective who by now was well into the realm of Morpheus. I recognized the pile of kit that I had loaned him and found the torch I had sent along. I dropped to my knees at the door of the tent and shone the light onto the face of the soundly sleeping Sherlock Holmes. I grabbed his foot and gave it a series of unkind shakes.

"Holmes!" I shouted. "Wake up. Wake up!"

He is usually a light sleeper when in the throes of working on a case, but this time, he was well beyond his afternoon nap. I shouted and tugged some more until a distraught and squinting Holmes looked into the torch light.

He was seriously confused for several seconds and then suddenly lurched upright, fully conscious and cognizant. "Watson? What in the name of all that is holy are you doing here?"

"Get up, Holmes. You must. Immediately. I put a flask of coffee into your kit bag. Get out of the tent and drink a cup

and I will explain.”

I found the flask, poured a cup of what by now was stone cold coffee and handed it to Holmes as he emerged. As he gulped it back, I related what I had learned that morning. By the time I had finished Holmes was no longer looking sleepy-eyed. There was a touch of color upon his sallow cheeks. His eyes were bright and, even in the limited light from the torch, I could see the blazing intensity that I knew to be the mark of his steeled determination. He quietly noted that George Burnwell had now become his one and only suspect and had to be stopped.

“Where is he?” I demanded. “He is part of this club is he not? Did he not come with the Holders on this trip?”

“He did,” said Holmes. “He came with Mary Holder sitting behind him. But just as I was falling into my tent I saw the two of them drive down the lane toward the exit.”

I refused for a moment to accept the unthinkable. “Could she possibly be part of what took place? The theft? The murder of that girl?”

Holmes paused. “I would not have thought so, but I have seen enough to know that once the passions of the human heart take over the senses, all hell may happen. It is possible. Yes.”

“What,” I asked, “could they be doing up here in the North in the middle of the night? Have they gone back to London?”

For a few seconds, Holmes closed his eyes. Upon opening them, he said, “The scouts. They are camped a few miles away from here, on the far side of Kinder Scout. The only damage he could inflict tonight would be to them. We will have to find them and warn them.”

I said, “Lestrade sent some marines to protect them, did he not?”

“Yes,” said Holmes. “He did. But Burnwell does not know that, and it may not be sufficient if they are taken by surprise. Come, Watson, we have a job to do.”

He hurriedly dressed and we both mounted our motorcycles. As good fortune would have it, both were new bikes and were equipped with the very recently patented Pockley headlamps. It was now pitch dark along the road leading back toward the highway and we drove slowly, not risking outrunning the eerily lit zone in front of us. I kept waving the torchlight at every signpost until we entered the village of Hayfield and spotted the sign pointing to Kinder Scout. We turned east, but the road came to an end at the Royal Hotel. I dismounted and walked to the edge of the parking area and peered down the trail into the valley. It was entirely dark and the small beam of light from the torch disclosed a sharp descent along a trail. We could go no farther on the bikes or even on foot until first light. Holmes walked to the door of the hotel and knocked repeatedly until it was opened by a man in his nightclothes who must have been the innkeeper.

Holmes explained who he was. The fellow had heard of him and said he was happy to help in any way. Holmes asked if a man on a motorcycle, possibly accompanied by a young woman had passed by earlier.

"Aye, just a few hours back. A bit before it became dark. There was a fellow on a motorcycle, one of those with the sidecar attached. The woman was riding behind him. They asked about where the boys were camped and I told them that they were on the far side of Kinder Scout. It's a good four hours hike from here. They thanked me and then didn't they start down the trail into the valley on the motorcycle. You can do it if you have plenty of light and move slowly. And that, Mr. Holmes, was the last I saw of them. I would have seen them if they came back out, but they haven't. As far as I know they are still down there, or else they found the Boy Scouts. I really cannot say any more, sir. You can follow them at daybreak if you want. Won't be easy. You're quite welcome to wait in our sitting room. It has a beautiful view of the valley. Of course, that won't mean much in the middle of

the night. But at daybreak, you will be able to see all the way to the top of Kinder Scout."

He shuffled back through the hotel to a spacious room that was filled with several chairs and sofas. He turned on a lamp and led us to two comfortable chairs beside a large window.

"At dawn, you two chaps will have a pleasant from here." He gestured toward the large window. He hand stopped moving in mid swipe and he walked until his face was directly against the window. Then he moved quickly back, turned off the lamp, and returned to the window. For several seconds, he stared out of it and then muttered. "What the devil? There's a fire in the valley. The woods are on fire. Good heavens. The whole district is a tinder box. It will be an inferno in no time."

He turned away and rushed out of the room. I heard him shouting to his wife and the help. Holmes and I looked down into the darkness and watched as a fire slowly moved in a nearly straight line along what I saw must be the floor of the valley. "What is that?" I said, totally confused. "Forest fires do not move in single straight lines."

"They do when they are following a tract of petrol or some such fuel that has been laid down," he replied. I could feel his grip on my arm as he spoke. "As soon as the sun comes up the wind will spread the fire up and over the high ground and down on the scouts camped on the far side. They will not have a chance. They will be burned alive."

We turned and hurried out of the room to the front lobby of the hotel where the lights had now been turned on. The innkeeper, still in his nightshirt was shouting instructions. He turned to us, terror on his face. "I've sent my groom into the village to fetch the guides. They know the trail and can run it in the dark. If they can get in front of the fire, they can reach the scouts and get them moving before the fire traps them. They should be along in a few minutes."

It was a full twenty minutes before we heard the running steps of several men approaching the hotel. The groom and three men came running into the courtyard. From the edge of the property, they looked down into the valley and could see the line of fire. It had already thickened and the front edge of it had inched its way up the rise that led to the top of Kinder Scout. Each of the guides was equipped with a powerful torch and they quickly descended the path into the darkness of the depths in front of us. For a few minutes we could see the glow from their torches, and then they vanished into the darkness.

For what seemed an eternity, although in reality not more than an hour, Holmes, the innkeeper, his wife and a few of his staff stood at the edge of the valley, looking down into it, hoping against hope that we would soon see lights from torches making their way back. I knew, however, that it would be several hours before the guides could reach the boys and their leaders and get them on the trail and to safety.

Shortly after four o'clock in the morning, just as the first shades of dawn were seen on the eastern horizon, one of the hotel staff gave a shout. "There are the lights. They're back. They're safe." A cheer went up that almost immediately turned to horrified silence. The tree guides appeared, running back up the steep path toward us. They were alone.

The one in front was gasping for breath. He began speaking as he climbed back up the last part of the trail. "The fire's already across the trail. We couldn't cross it."

"Could you not get around it?" cried the innkeeper.

"Tried. Impossible. The terrain is impassable and the fire is moving faster than we could. We had to turn and run for our lives. The only chance we have now is to run in from the north side. Sir," he said, looking at the innkeeper, "we need your car. Can someone drive us around to Glossop. We will have to try from the Sheffield Road. It's our only hope."

"Take my car," shouted the innkeeper. "But that will take at least another four hours. When the wind comes up, the fire will move far too fast."

"Then you better pray," said the guide, "for a change in the wind direction. Otherwise, they will all be roasted." He turned and ran toward the garage. The hotel car was backed out, a driver got in along with the guides and they sped off toward Hayfield. Within a minute, the sound of the car engine had faded and we returned to our silent and fearful vigil.

By five o'clock there was a faint light in the eastern sky and, as feared, the morning breeze from the west had begun to pick up. Holmes, the innkeeper and I continued to stand and look into the valley. I said a prayer for a change in the wind, but it was now beyond praying.

"How many are there?" asked the innkeeper.

"My information," said Holmes, "is that there are thirty boys, aged between eight and twelve, four fathers who are the scout leaders, and four marines, who arrived just yesterday."

"The marines should be able to help," I said, knowing at the time that it was a foolish comment.

"They are good," said Holmes, "in many places, but not much use against a raging forest fire. No one is."

For several minutes, no one spoke. We watched the fire creeping further up the distant hill, moving faster with each passing minute. To fill the silence, I spoke.

"Had you suspected George Burnwell all along?"

"He was certainly on the top of my list, along with the daughter. He could have just been a pawn for the thugs in the Beryl Anarchist faction. I could not tell. And it had not been possible to eliminate the brothers, nor the maid and her avaricious boyfriend, nor even the partner, Stevenson. It was obvious that Burnwell and the daughter had a passionate if illicit understanding going on between them. The brothers were clearly alienated from their father but

would have to have been absurdly foolish to bring financial ruin upon him and thus lose their allowance and their inheritance. Hatred between family members does cloud rational thinking, but accepting those consequences requires a burning self-destructive desire for revenge and I just did not see that in them. The volumptumus maid is oddly astute, but seemed to be far too interested in flirting with her daily admirers to be distracted with an intricate crime. The partner, Stevenson, would go down along with the Holder ship, so I eventually ruled him out.

“That left Burnwell and Mary. The inevitable conclusion is that she had learned the combination of the safe, and, given her passion for him, had handed it over. I would deduce that he had promised her that they would both become fabulously rich, and that the only ones to truly suffer would be the local aristocrats who were hiding their shameful secrets.”

“Given him the combination?” I said incredulously. “But you cracked that safe open in no time and proved that any one of a hundred thieves could have done it.”

Holmes smiled grimly. “No Watson, I deliberately deflected attention from those responsible, hoping by doing so that they would become over-confident, play their next hand, and expose themselves. In truth, I said that I knew five men who could have opened it. Three of them are in prison, two as a result of my helping Lestrade. One has fled to America, and I am the fifth. Of the hundred locksmiths, I referred to only a handful have the requisite skill and they are of unquestioned character and bonded fully by Lloyds. Frankly, that safe was a miserable thing to open. It took me twenty full minutes of concentrated effort and even then I nearly gave up.

“I elected to let the blackmail against the Hairfields go ahead, thinking that there would be a protracted series of negotiations, during which I would find enough clues to identify the thieves.”

“But,” I said, “you had not anticipated such enlightened and opportunistic victims.”

“Correct. And neither did I expect that Mr. Atherley would be such a jingoistic fool as to refuse to enter negotiations when his daughter’s life was in the balance. I am afraid that I shall have to live with that one.”

For another ten minutes, he was silent and then he spoke in a whisper. “And I did not, in all my days upon this earth, expect that I would be present and witnessing the most horrific slaughter of innocent children since the days of Herod. Within an hour, all of those boys and men will be burned alive. They will die in unimaginable panic and pain.”

He fell again into silence. A few of the hotel guests had learned of what was taking place and stood with us at the edge of the valley, all thrilling with horror but too transfixed to turn away.

By six in the morning, the sun was up and the breeze had stiffened. The line of the fire, now a raging inferno, was within a few hundred yards of the top of the Kinder Scout peak. Within another hour, it would be over the peak and descending on those sitting defenseless and unsuspecting on the far side.

We stood, all silently praying for anything ... that the prevailing westerly winds would do an about face, or that a rainstorm would miraculously tumble out of a blue sky. I looked at the horizon, at least seven times, maybe more, but no small cloud like a man’s hand appeared. I stood in utter silence, the only sound I heard was my own heart pounding, and my labored breathing.

And then I heard another sound.

Chapter Ten

A Bat Out of Hell



At first, it might have been a distant locust, quietly buzzing in a far off tree. And then it increased and I thought that a swarm of bees must be close. But there were no bees to be seen and the sound was getting louder. It was coming from the village and increasing every second. Soon it became a mechanical roar, ever increasing until it was almost deafening. I looked at Holmes and he looked back, both of us clearly in total incomprehension.

Then, entering into the long driveway of the hotel, there appeared a man on a large motorcycle. Behind him was another, then another, then another. An entire column of them was thundering toward us. "Get back!" I shouted at the small crowd. We parted and the first massive machine, the Brough 1200, raced past us. Hitting the edge of the trail at speed it lofted into the air, landing several yards down into the valley and spitting back waves of grit and gravel. The rider was dressed in full leather and his legs instinctively spread out and balanced the huge machine as it fishtailed down the slope. Right behind him came another motorcycle, this one a Norton Big Four, just like the one I had been on a few hours ago. It likewise sped over the lip on the valley and landed on the trail below. Then came another, and another. The combined sound was louder than anything I had ever heard since my time of being knocked off my feet by the explosions on a battlefield. The earth was trembling and the air was thick with grit, dust, and exhaust fumes. I was not counting but when the last one had leapt over the edge of the valley, I estimated that some forty Big Fours had roared past us.

We all stood watching them as they disappeared into the forest on the near side of the valley.

I heard Holmes whisper to himself, "*C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre*. They are too late. The fire is already across the trail and they cannot drive around it anymore than the guides could run around it."

I dropped my head in despair, my heart palpitating with fear. Briefly, I lifted my field glasses and looked down into the valley. The entire column of motorcycles had stopped on the valley floor. In front of them was about a hundred yards of open flat trail, burned over but clear, and then came the zone of the inferno. I then pulled down the glasses and looked with my naked eyes, not believing what I was witnessing. Every one of the riders had pulled out a muffler and was wrapping it around the lower portion of his face.

"Oh dear God in Heaven," I muttered quietly. "They are going to run the fire. They are going to ride into hell."

I handed the field glasses up to Holmes. He watched and slowly lowered them.

"They have a chance," he said. "The fire is mainly in the crowns of the trees. The line of flames is not wide. Their odds are not good, but they have a chance."

The man with the first motorcycle, the Brough, raised his hand and gave a wave to those behind him. His bike took off like a shot and by the time it hit the inferno zone, it must have been moving at near to one hundred miles an hour. It disappeared into the blaze. I stopped breathing. It was a very long seven seconds and then I saw the bike blast through the wall of smoke on the far side. He continued on up the hill until the other riders could see him. The first in line gave another wave and took off. One by one they tore into the wall of flame and one by one they appeared on the far side. Within five minutes all of them were straddling their bikes above the zone of the flames. I could see some of them clasping their hands together, reaching from one bike across

to the next. I shouted a spontaneous *hurrah* and gave Holmes a slap on the back.

Holmes looked at me but was not smiling. "They still have to find the boys and get them out of there. The only way out will be to run them down the north side. There is no trail there. The bikes will be useless. The fire is moving far too quickly. I would not get my hopes up."

He was right. These courageous men had ridden through the flames but were still not likely to be able to save those on the far side of the peak. I looked up to the top of the peak, now fully exposed in the morning sun. It was a foolish act, as I knew there was no way I could see over to the far side, but I looked all the same.

I lowered the glasses and, one more time with my naked eyes, stared in disbelief. I handed the glasses to Holmes. "The top of the peak," I said. "Look. Now!"

He did and handed the glasses back and I looked again. Coming along the path over the top of the peak was a column of people ... on foot ... marching. They were walking toward the bikers and no more than a hundred yards separated them.

"What is happening up there?" I asked, looking at Holmes.

"Somehow," said Holmes, "they not only knew to get moving, but they knew to march directly toward the forest fire. Perhaps you did not notice, Watson, but every one of those motorcycles that roared past us had a blanket or two rolled up and lashed behind the driver." Here he paused and looked again through the glasses. "They are going to run the boys back through the fire."

He handed me the glasses and I observed that the now assembled scouts, bikers, and marines were moving quickly. The marines and fathers were lifting the smaller boys onto the seats behind the drivers and folding their legs up so that they sat cross-legged, protecting their bare lower legs. Embers from the fire were falling on them and they kept

whisking them away before the lads could be burned. The older boys were climbing on behind other drivers and pulling a blanket around them. Then the marines and fathers finally climbed on behind the small boys and pulled a blanket tightly around the two of them. One after the other they took off toward the encroaching wall of flame.

Now the run was downhill. It took less than five seconds for each of them to appear in the burnt-over area below the fire. One by one they came through and they kept going along the floor of the valley and turned up and into the forest just below us. Soon they had all departed from the area just above the fire ... except for one lone bike. It was hard to tell, what with the smoke now obscuring my vision, but the occasional flashes of sunlight reflecting off the chrome said that the big Brough had not yet begun its return. Through the waves of smoke, I could see two figures, one with his arm around the other, helping him. He lifted the chap on to the back of the big bike, wrapped a blanket around him, climbed on and immediately disappeared into the fire. A few seconds later the Brough emerged from the other side of the fire and came flying along the floor of the valley.

It was another ten minutes before the first bike appeared at the top of the valley and came to a stop in the parking area where we were waiting. The blanket had been discarded and I could see a big marine, his muscular arms surrounding a small boy in a scouting uniform. He hopped off his seat and lifted the lad onto the ground. The boy's eyes gave evidence that a few minutes ago he had been crying. Now he ran back to the edge of the valley and watched the rest of his troop arrive on the remaining bikes. He ran back to the marine and with a beaming face, said, "Crikey, that was terrific. Thanks, Captain Osmond."

"Captain Osmond," I said to the marine. "How could you possibly have known to get the boys up and marching toward the fire?"

“The woman,” said he. “In the middle of the night, this woman came running through the camp like a bat out of hell, screaming at us to get the boys up and get out of there. She’s screaming at us about a forest fire, but then she becomes calm and forceful and says that the rescuers are on their way, but we have to march toward the fire. If we try to go north, we won’t have a chance. I ran up to the top of Kinder Scout and I can see that she is right. So we started marching straight toward hell.”

“Where did she come from?” I asked.

“Like I said sir, a bat out of hell. She had run through the fire.”

Within a few more seconds, the cub scouts were all gathered together and laughing and talking. Some were pointing out places on their uniforms where embers had burned through. A couple of the women who were guests at the hotel were going over the bodies of the lads, making sure that they were not injured. There were one or two who had suffered small burns, but not so badly as to interrupt their whoops and laughter.

Some of the older boys and the fathers were not so lucky. They had been wearing scouting shorts and their lower legs could not be covered by the blankets. Several had quite serious burns and, not having my medical bag with me, I did what I could and immediately had some cold water poured onto the worst spots. We were under an hour by car from the hospital in Manchester and, if necessary, they could be sent there for treatment. Some were sent off but none, however, were anxious to leave the place where all had now crowded together.

The last bike now slowly pulled over the edge of the valley. The passenger was still clutching a blanket. The driver got off and helped the chap behind him do the same. Someone pointed them over to me, and I heard the word “doctor.” The passenger chap must have been injured as he was limping badly. But he had enough strength to unfasten

and remove his leather helmet and I watched in shock as a large volume of blonde hair fell out. The goggles were removed and I recognized the face of Miss Mary Holder. She had several severe burns on her face and hands which I knew would not be serious to her health but would leave disfiguring scars. I could see by the bulge in her riding boot that something untoward had happened to her ankle. I took my penknife out of my pocket and slowly cut down on her boot until it could be pulled off. Her teeth were clenched in pain and I knew that along with the pain from the burns she might be close to passing out. Instead, she took a deep breath, extended her hand to the man who had driven her, now standing without his helmet and obviously Mr. Arthur Holder. He helped her over to a car that was waiting to take those who needed medical treatment into Manchester. He made as if to get in along with her but she waved him off and the car departed, leaving Arthur Holder standing alone.

Two local police constables had arrived at the hotel and had given instructions to everyone involved that they could not leave. They would all have to be questioned. Officers from Scotland Yard were on their way. Terribly sorry, of course, but such things cannot be avoided. The hotel would provide cold drinks and snacks.

Chapter Eleven

Let the Fire Take Me



"Come, Watson," said Holmes. "We need to have a word with Arthur Holder." We walked up to the chap who was still looking in the direction of the car that had recently departed, taking his step-sister to the hospital.

"Arthur Holder, my name is Sherlock Holmes. This is my colleague, Dr. Watson. Might we have a few words with you?"

He looked at Holmes and smiled. "Of course, Mr. Holmes. If it were not for you, some forty people would now be dead, along with the woman I love. So how can I help you?"

"A conversation over an ale would be in order," said Holmes. We entered the hotel bar and found a quiet section, fortunate that the Boy Scouts had a strict abstinence policy that rendered them all stuck in the breakfast room.

"I must admit," began Holmes, "that I was surprised when you and your friends arrived here. Would you mind explaining just how that came about?"

"Happy to. A few hours ago I got a phone call from my sister saying get my arse and my bike and my friends over to Kinder Scout right way. So here we are." He grinned and took a sip on his beer.

"Perhaps," said Holmes, smiling in return, "you could back up just a little. A few more details from the past would help to tell your story; from the beginning."

"Right sir. I suppose then that I should start when Eric and I got back from the war. No, maybe before we went off to war. Yes. I can start there." He paused and reflected.

"In fact, before that. I'll start the day our mother died.

“It was the summer of 1893. Eric and I were just thirteen and Mary was no more than four. Dad and our mother, and Uncle Phil and Aunt Lillian, and Eric, Mary and I were on a beach holiday down at Brighton. The children were left with a governess and the adults all went out boating. A storm came up and they capsized. My aunt and uncle drowned, leaving Mary an orphan. My mother drowned, but dad was a strong swimmer and he made it to shore. Maybe it was not fair of us, but Eric and I have always believed that dad could have saved them all and that he was a selfish coward and only saved himself.

“After that he adopted Mary and he gave us all everything we ever asked for, but we have never truly forgiven him. Eric and I became very close and we reasoned that we would be forever dependent on Dad and his money if we did not set out on our own, so we demanded that we go to Sandhurst so we could have a career in Her Majesty’s military forces, and get away and see the world. Dad did not like that idea one little bit, but we dug in and would not give, so he agreed. After we finished up at the Academy, we joined up with the Northumberland Fusiliers, and next thing we know we’re off to South Africa. I will not say much about our time there except that Eric and I had to grow up awful quickly and, we’ve been doing the best we can to forget those years ever since.

“When we come back we find that our baby sister, Mary, has grown up and is now a beautiful young girl of fourteen years and full of pluck, and spirit, and jolly smart. Well, Eric and I are a bit burned up inside from the war, and not interested in getting married or having the life expected of the sons of a wealthy banker. So we travel around a bit but it’s hard to do that with no money, so we agree to live near to Dad if he will give us a regular allowance. He put us on salary at the bank, but it never amounted to our doing much. But what did happen is that as we spent time around Mary, both Eric and I just fell in love with her. We joked that

we both dreamed of being married to her. We are not joined by blood so, strictly speaking, it would not be illegal, even if it was not what is considered proper. Eric and I even agreed that we would share her. We thought that idea was amusing. Dad did not. But then George Burnwell reappeared. We had known him during the war and we knew that he had no money, but he was an absolute master at making us feel good about ourselves when he was with us, so the three of us chummed around.

“Next thing is that George says he has fallen in love with Mary, and Mary says that she is over the moon about George. Eric and I talk this over and we agree that we should be happy about that. Dad would give George a position in the bank in order to keep Mary close, and then we would stay close as well. George was usually fun to be around, and if neither of us could have Mary then, at least, we would all still see each other. So everything was jolly good.”

Here I interrupted. “Were you not aware of the stories about George from the war? They were rather damning.”

“We were, doctor, we were. But you have been in an overseas war as well, and you know that men do a lot of very strange things out there that they would never do again back home. Eric and I had both killed many decent men who we were told were our enemies, and we stood guard over Kitchener’s concentration camp while the British Empire made thousands of innocent people starve, become diseased, and die. So we do not put much stock in stories of what happened to men in war. Can you understand that, doctor?”

I could. I had seen enough of it myself.

“Well now,” Arthur continued, “the four of us were having quite a good time, getting on well together. Then just over a week ago dad goes all apoplectic and crazy and accuses us of stealing his files, the ones he keeps in his safe and have all the secrets about all his slimy, immoral, noble clients. Eric and I knew straightaway what had happened. We knew

that neither of us had taken the files but that Mary also knew the combination. Once when Eric and I were reciting it, she overheard us, and she is as smart as a whip, so she remembers it. We sat her down and demanded to know what she was up to. She explains that it is only fair. The three of us were born into money by sheer good luck and had done nothing to deserve it. George, who she wanted to marry, was born poor. We all knew that the rich lords and ladies in that file paid off all sorts of folks to keep their mouths shut about their perverted misdeeds, and all George was going to do was to become one more mouth that was paid to keep shut. And he would put the files back in a few days and that would be the end of it.

“My brother and I were not very happy about it, and we had heard rumors at the Beryl Bikers about George’s palling around with some of the nasty fellows who called themselves the Anarchists, but Mary pleaded with us. She said that if we informed on George to Dad, it would ruin her life. So we decided to take the more chivalrous view and preserve her secret. But then the first family that George tries to manipulate were those disgusting pieces of filth, Lord and Lady Haircut. George’s scheme did not work and the entire country was mocking him. We assumed he would try again, but it would still be another one of those parasitical noble families, so we were not going to fight him over it and run the risk of a horrible exposure of the woman we loved.

“After the meeting where the Club did the planning for the camping trip, Eric and I concluded that it was too hot to be in the city and so we left and came early up to the Peaks. We heard nothing about the murder of the girl in Belgravia. Had we heard about it, we would have known that George was involved, knowing as we did his hatred for Major Atherley. But it was not until Mary phoned the campsite and got the proprietor to fetch us to the phone, and told us everything, that we knew what an unspeakable, horrible

mess we were part of, and our sister had helped to create. So over we came."

"And what," asked Holmes, "did Mary tell you when she called?"

"She said that she had been the one to deliver the ransom note to the Atherley house, but that George had told her that it was only a demand like he had given to the Hairfields, and that these next folks were far more concerned about their reputations. She did not know anything about the kidnapping or murder of the girl until she read it in the papers the next day. She demanded that George explain, but he said that it was all a terrible coincidence that on the same day he made a demand to be paid to keep his mouth shut someone else, and he has no idea who, went and kidnapped the girl and killed her. He said he had nothing to do with it, and he pretends to be angry because Mary even dared to suspect him.

"Then early last evening he suggests that the two of them go for a romantic ride under the stars and find a lovely place to enjoy a little hanky-panky. Mary said she agreed because she was upset about the tension between them and off they go. They get to the trail leading down into the Kinder Scout Valley and at the bottom George stops and says he has to leave some jerry cans full of petrol for some of the boys who are going on a cross-country ride tomorrow and may run out. She thinks that is very strange but while they are stopped she reaches into her pocket and finds a folded up set of notes. She uses the torch to read them and sees a note from Mr. Sherlock Holmes, along with a copy of the police report on the murder of the Atherley child and sees that all the evidence points to George.

"I am guessing, Mr. Holmes, that you managed to slip those notes to her." Holmes nodded in the affirmative.

"She yells at him and screams and he comes over and hits her in the face and knocks her to the ground. He says thank you because she has been very useful to him but

within a fortnight he and his friends will have over one hundred families all paying them over five hundred pounds a month each not to cut their children to pieces or burn them alive. She gets up, knowing that she can outrun him, but he hits her very hard on the back of the head with the torch and knocks her unconscious. When she comes to the forest around her is on fire and she runs as fast as she can up the hill and into the village. She asks at the local pub about who is up on Kinder Scout and hears that there is a scout troop, and it's the May-Bel troop, and then she knows the truth.

"So she phones me and tells me all the story I have just told you, and then says to get all the fellows with the most powerful machines over here and that we are going to have to ride through a forest fire and rescue the boys before they are burned to death. I tell her that she must be mad and that no one in his right mind would try to ride a motorcycle through a forest fire. And she says that if she has to run through it, then I can jolly well drive through it. Then she hangs up and I take it she started running down the hill and up and through the fire. That was the last I talked to her before meeting up with her where we caught up to the scouts up above the fire line.

"She had injured her ankle when she tripped on a part of a tree branch that had fallen in the fire and it took a bit to get her on the bike, but we made it back."

Here he stopped for a few moments. "And now we have to sort things out. I suppose we have to find George, and then Mary will have to testify against him. It will not be pleasant."

"Scotland Yard," said Holmes, "will have bulletins all over the country and the continent by tomorrow. George will be caught and punished and most likely swing for his terrible deeds. And then he will no doubt receive a more than sufficient punishment thereafter."

I nodded my agreement. The conversation stopped for a few minutes and we all sipped quietly on our beer.

“It is not,” said Holmes, “a critical part of this case, but I observed that your time at the top of the hill with Miss Holder was much more than necessary to help someone with a damaged ankle get on the back of a motorcycle. Would you mind explaining why it took you so long?”

Arthur Holder said nothing, and sipped several times on his beer. “When I reached the top, Mary and the fathers and the marines all started helping the boys get on the bikes and wrapped up in the blankets. Eric took the last remaining father on his bike, leaving only Mary and me. She turned to me and said, ‘Please leave me. I would rather die.’ She sat down on the road and refused to get up and onto the bike. She said, ‘I have loved and been defiled by a monster. I have been his tool. I helped to kill an innocent girl. I do not want to live. Please, Arthur, if you love me, just leave and let the fire take me. It is what I deserve.’

“I said all sorts of encouraging things to her, but she just kept telling me to leave her alone, that she wanted to die. So I told her that I loved and if she would get up and onto the bike, I would marry her and be the father of her children, and love her for the rest of my life. She just looked at me with a great sadness and said, ‘I know you love me. I know Eric loves me. I have already brought enough misery to you both and to dad. I will not spend the rest of my life with you and your brother hating each other because one of you married me. Please go and let me die.’

“So I said to her, I said, ‘Eric and I rode side by side all the way here and we had to shout at each other, but we made an arrangement. With George out of the picture, one of us now could marry you. He agreed to let me marry you and to be the best man at the wedding.’

“She looked up and it was clear she did not believe me. ‘What did you have to give him?’ she asked. ‘Your portion of your inheritance?’

“ ‘More,’ I said. ‘I told him he could have my Brough if I could have you.’

“She looked up at me with her mouth wide open, all incredulous. ‘You gave up your bike?’”

“ ‘For the woman I love,’ I said.

“ ‘You love me,’ she said. ‘You must.’

“ ‘I do,’ I said. ‘Now get on the bike. It’s going to be my last ride.’

“ ‘Fine,’ she said. ‘You’re a bloody fool, Arthur, and I’ll marry you.’

“And she got up and got on the bike.”



Did you enjoy this story? Are there ways it could have been improved? Please help the author and future readers of future New Sherlock Holmes Mysteries by posting a review on the site from which you purchased this book. Thanks, and happy sleuthing and deducing.

You are invited to join the New Sherlock Holmes Mysteries mailing list and receive Irregular announcements about the release of new titles, special promotions, and Sherlockian news. Click on the link below and submit your email address. Privacy is promised.

www.SherlockHolmesMystery.com

Historical and Other Notes

The Boer War took place from 1899 to 1902 in what is now South Africa. The tactics used by the British forces of scorching the earth, herding the families of the Boers into concentration camps, and starving them led to the (recorded) deaths of over 25,000 whites and an estimated 15,000 blacks. Over eighty percent of the victims were children. Today we would charge the British leaders with crimes against humanity.

These tactics were strongly condemned both in Britain and throughout the world. However, there is no evidence that the individual soldiers were blamed or ostracized, leading to their alienation or the forming of both law-abiding and outlaw motorcycle clubs. That set of events was borrowed from what happened to soldiers returning from Vietnam.

Both Norton and Triumph motorcycles were in commercial production during the first decade of the twentieth century and were highly popular. The Brough – *the Rolls-Royce of Motorcycles* – did not appear until after World War One and remained a high-end, custom produced machine. It was the favorite of T. E. Lawrence ... and his last.

The scouting movement and the formation of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides swept England and then the western world during the decade before World War One. Hundreds of thousands of boys and girls became members and went on all sorts of wonderful camping outings.

The Peak District is a beautiful, rugged region about four hours north of London. The topography has been somewhat altered in this story to fit the narrative.

It is not recommended that anyone attempt to ride a motorcycle through a forest fire, let alone run through one.



Acknowledgements

All writers of pastiche stories of Sherlock Holmes must acknowledge their debt to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and to the Sacred Canon of the original stories. Or, if you are a hopeless Sherlockian, then to Dr. John H. Watson, who wrote almost all of the stories and that Doyle chap who was his literary agent and got *The Strand* to publish them.

I discovered *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* while a student at Scarlett Heights Collegiate Institute in Toronto. My English teachers – Bill Stratton, Norm Oliver, and Margaret Tough – inspired me to read and write. I shall be forever grateful to them.

The plot and characters of this novella are inspired by and adapted freely from *The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet*. This new and original mystery story was greatly aided, as are all of my stories, by Google and Wikipedia.

My dearest and best friend, Mary Engelking, read all drafts, helped with whatever historical and geographical accuracy was required, and offered insightful recommendations for changes to the narrative structure, characters, and dialogue. Thank you.

Many words and whole phrases and sentences have been lifted and copied shamelessly and joyfully from the sacred canon of Sherlockian literature. Should any word or turn of phrase strike the reader as the *mot juste*, you may count on its having been plagiarized.

The diatribe delivered in this story by Lord Hairfield against the English newspapers is copied with only a few modifications from that most brilliant of English television series, *Yes, Minister/Yes, Prime Minister*. The entire series is well worth buying and watching, and then watching again.

The FX Cable series, *The Sons of Anarchy*, obviously inspired some of the descriptions of the outlaw bikers who appear in this story. Great series.

For the very idea of writing a new Sherlock Holmes mystery, I thank the Toronto Bootmakers, the Sherlock Holmes Society of Canada.

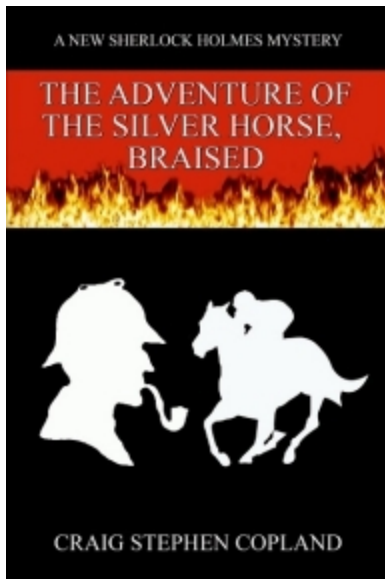


About the Author

In May of 2014 the Sherlock Holmes Society of Canada – better known as The Bootmakers (www.torontobootmakers.com) – announced a contest for a new Sherlock Holmes story. Although he had no experience writing fiction, the author submitted a short Sherlock Holmes mystery and was blessed to be declared one of the winners. Thus inspired, he has continued to write new Sherlock Holmes Mysteries since. In real life, he writes about and serves as a consultant for political campaigns in Canada and the USA (www.ConservativeGrowth.net), but would abandon that pursuit if he could possibly earn a decent living writing about Sherlock Holmes. He currently writes from Toronto, Tokyo, and Manhattan.

More New Sherlock Holmes Mysteries by Craig Stephen Copland

Available immediately from Amazon
as paperback or e-book



The Silver Horse, Braised. The greatest horse race of the century, with the best five-year-olds of England running against the best of America, will take place in a week at Epsom Downs. Millions have been bet on the winners. Owners, jockeys, grooms, and gamblers from across England arrive. So too do a host of colorful characters from the racetracks of America. Rumors of false statistics, threats, bribes, the administering of opiates to horse or rider, immoral seductions, abductions,

and even murders are abounding. Scotland Yard is concerned. When a famous jockey is mysteriously killed while practicing on one of the favorites, Sherlock Holmes is called in.

Before the race, everything appears to be in order. The race is run and an incredible white horse emerges as the winner by over twenty-five lengths. Celebrations are in order and good times are had. And that night disaster strikes. More deaths, of both men and beasts, take place. Holmes identifies several suspects and then, to his great disappointment and frustration, he fails to prove that any of them committed the crime.

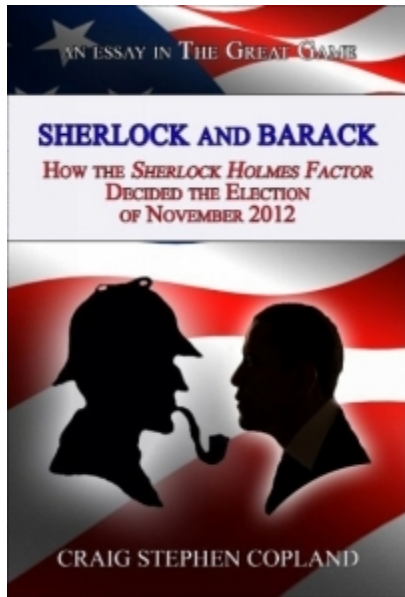
Until . . .

This completely original mystery is a tribute to the original Sherlock Holmes story, *Silver Blaze*. It also borrows from the great racetrack stories of Damon Runyon. Fans of both of these wonderful writers will enjoy seeing Holmes, Watson, and Lestrade – assisted by Harry the Horse, Little Miss Marker, Sorrowful, and the nameless narrator – as they finally bring the culprits to justice.

Click on cover image to preview or order.



The Adventure of the Blue Belt Buckle. A young street urchin discovers a man's belt and buckle under a bush in Hyde Park. He brings it to Sherlock Holmes, hoping for a reward. The buckle is unique and stunning, gleaming turquoise stones set in exquisitely carved silver; a masterpiece from the native American west. A body of an American Indian is found in a hotel room in Mayfair. Scotland Yard seeks the help of Sherlock Holmes in solving the murder. A secret key is found leading Sherlock Holmes to a replica set of the Crown Jewels. The real Jewels, supposedly secure inside the Tower of London are in danger of being stolen or destroyed. The Queen's Diamond Jubilee, to be held in just a few months, could be ruined. Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson, Scotland Yard, the Home Office and even Her Majesty all team up to prevent a crime of unspeakable dimensions.



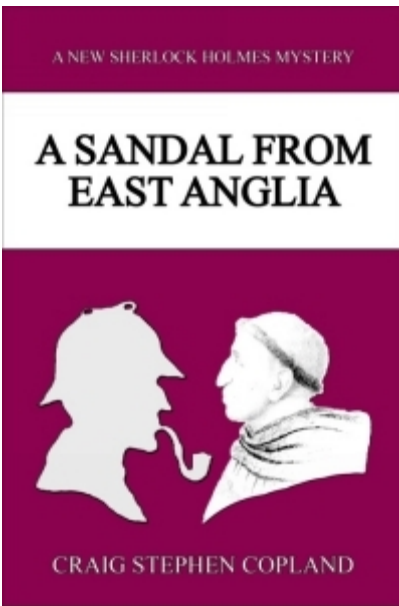
Sherlock and Barack.

This is NOT a new Sherlock Holmes Mystery. It is a Sherlockian research paper seeking answers to some very serious questions. Why did Barack Obama win in November 2012? Why did Mitt Romney lose? Pundits and political scientists have offered countless reasons.

This book reveals the truth - The Sherlock Holmes Factor. Had it not been for Sherlock Holmes, Mitt Romney would be president. This study is the first entry by Sherlockian Craig Stephen Copland into the Grand Game of amateur analysis of the canon of Sherlock Holmes stories, and their effect on western civilization.

Sherlockians will enjoy the logical deductions that lead to the inevitable conclusions

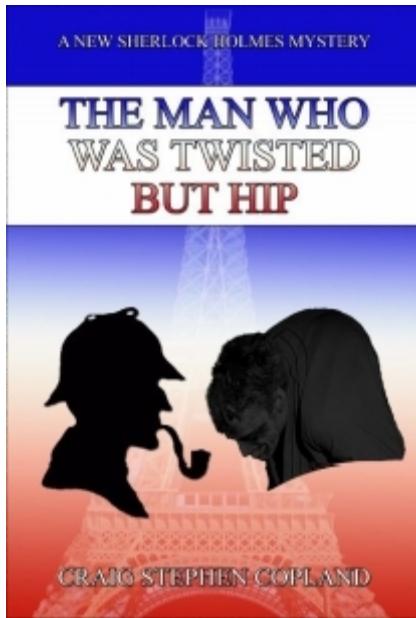
Click on cover image to preview or order.



A Sandal from East

Anglia. Archeological excavations unearth a sealed canister. In it is a document that has the potential to change the course of all of Christendom. There are some evil young men who are prepared to rob, and beat and even commit murder to keep its contents from ever becoming known. There is a strikingly beautiful young Sister, with a curious double life, who is determined to use the document to improve the lives of women throughout the world. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are called upon to protect the young woman, catch the killers, and trap the evil men who are greedily plotting against The Nun. The mystery is inspired by the original Sherlock Holmes story, A Scandal in Bohemia. Fans of Sherlock Holmes will enjoy a new story that maintains all the loved and familiar characters and settings of Victorian England.

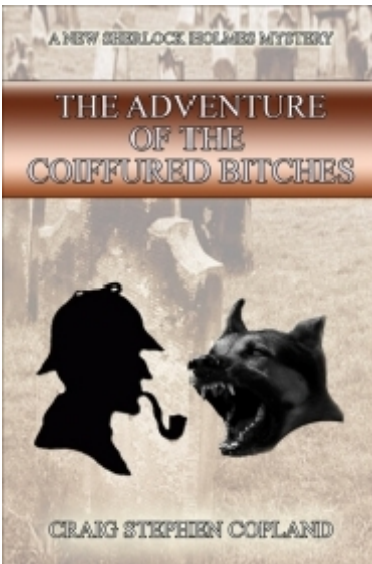
The Man Who Was Twisted But Hip. It is 1897 and France is torn apart by The Dreyfus Affair.



Westminster needs help from Sherlock Holmes to make sure that the evil tide of anti-Semitism that has engulfed France will not spread. A young officer in the Foreign Office suddenly resigns from his post and enters the theater. His wife calls for help from Sherlock Holmes. The evil professor is up to something, and it could have terrible consequences for the young couple and all of Europe. Sherlock and Watson run all over London and Paris solving the puzzle and seeking to thwart Moriarty.

This new Sherlock Holmes mystery is inspired by the original story, *The Man with the Twisted Lip*, as well as by the great classic by Victor Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

Click on cover image to preview or order.



The Adventure of the ***Coiffured Bitches.***

A beautiful young woman will soon inherit a lot of money. She disappears. Her little brother is convinced that she has become a zombie, living and not living in the graveyard of the ruined old church. Another young woman - flirtatious, independent, lovely - agrees to be the nurse to the little brother. She finds out far too much and, in desperation seeks help from Sherlock Holmes, the man she also adores.

Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson and Miss Violet Hunter must solve the mystery of the coiffured bitches, avoid the massive mastiff that could tear their throats, and protect the boy.

The story is inspired by the original Conan Doyle "Adventure of the Copper Beeches." Fans of the original Sherlock Holmes will enjoy seeing the same characters in a brand new murder mystery.



The Adventure of the Beryl Anarchists. A deeply distressed banker enters 221B Baker St. His safe has been robbed and he is certain that his motorcycle-riding sons have betrayed him. Highly incriminating and embarrassing records of the financial and personal affairs of England's nobility are now in the hands of blackmailers - the Beryl Anarchists - all passionately involved in the craze of motorcycle riding, and in ruthless criminal pursuits. And then a young girl is murdered.

Holmes and Watson must find the real culprits and stop them before more crimes are committed - too horrendous to be imagined.

This new mystery was inspired by *The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet* and borrows the setting and some of the characters. And, of course, our beloved Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are there, just as they are in the original Canon.

Click on cover image to preview or order.



The Adventure of the Notable Bachelorette.

A snobbish and obnoxious nobleman enters 221B Baker Street demanding the help of Sherlock Holmes in finding his much younger wife – a beautiful and spirited American from the West.

Three days later the wife is accused of a vile crime. Now she comes to Sherlock Holmes seeking his help to prove her innocence so she can avoid the gallows.

Neither noble husband nor wife have been playing by the rules of Victorian moral behavior.

So who did it? The wife? The mistress? The younger brother? Someone unknown?

Fan of Sherlock Holmes will enjoy this mystery, set in London during the last years of the nineteenth century, and written in the same voice as the beloved stories of the original canon. This new mystery was inspired by the original Sherlock Holmes story, *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor*.



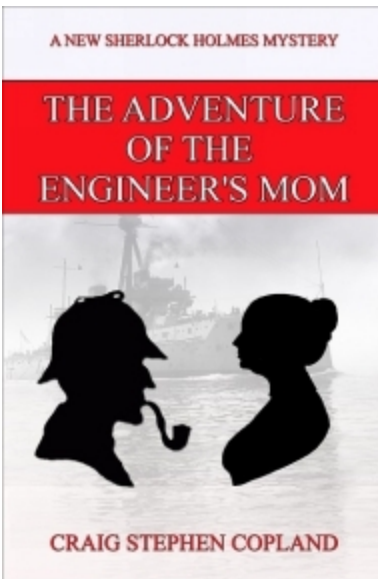
The Adventure of the Spectred Bat. A beautiful young woman, just weeks away from giving birth, arrives at Baker Street in the middle of the night. Her sister was attacked by a bat and died and now it is attacking her.

Could it be a vampire sent by the local band of Gypsies? Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are called upon to investigate. The step-father, the local Gypsies, and the furious future mother-in-law are all suspects. And was it really a vampire in the shape of a bat that took the young mother-to-be's life? This adventure takes the world's favorite detective away from London to Surrey, and then north to the lovely but deadly Lake District.

If you enjoy both stories about Sherlock Holmes and about vampires, you will love this one.

The story was inspired by the original Sherlock Holmes story, *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* and like the original, leaves the mind wondering and the heart racing.

Click on cover image to preview or order.



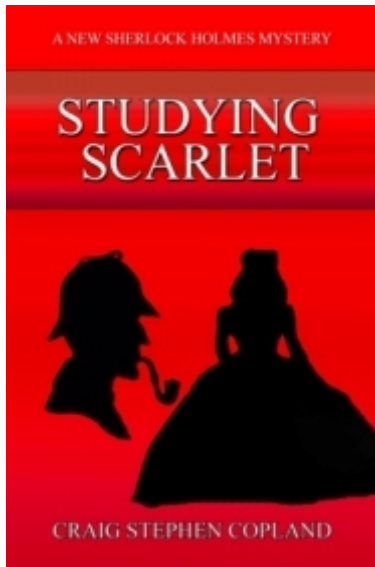
The Adventure of the Engineer's Mom. A brilliant young Cambridge University engineer is carrying out secret research for the Admiralty.

It will lead to the building of the world's most powerful battleship, The Dreadnaught.

His adventuress mother is kidnapped and having been spurned by Scotland Yard he seeks the help of Sherlock Holmes.

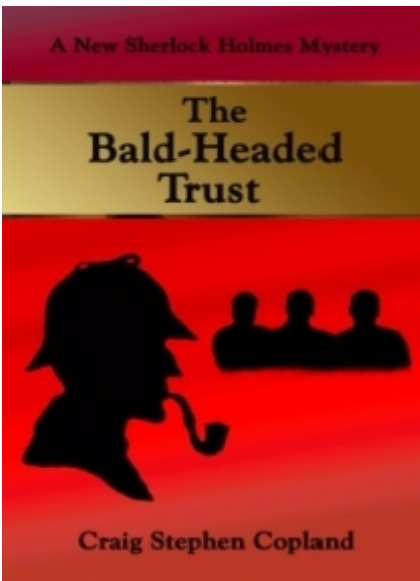
Was she taken by German spies, or an underhanded student, or by someone else? Whoever it was is prepared to commit cold-blooded murder to get what they want.

Holmes and Watson have help from an unexpected source – the engineer's mom herself. This new mystery is inspired by the original Sherlock Holmes story – The Engineer's Thumb. It is set in the same era in England and you will encounter several of the original characters, but now in a completely new traditional Sherlock Holmes mystery.



Studying Scarlet. Starlet O'Halloran (who bears a distinct resemblance to the South's most famous heroine) has arrived in London looking for her long lost husband, Brett. She and Momma come to 221B Baker Street seeking the help of Sherlock Holmes. Three men have already been murdered, garroted, by an evil conspiracy.

Unexpected events unfold and together Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson, Starlet, Brett, and two new members of the clan have to vanquish a band of murderous anarchists, rescue the King and save the British Empire. This is an unauthorized parody inspired by Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*.



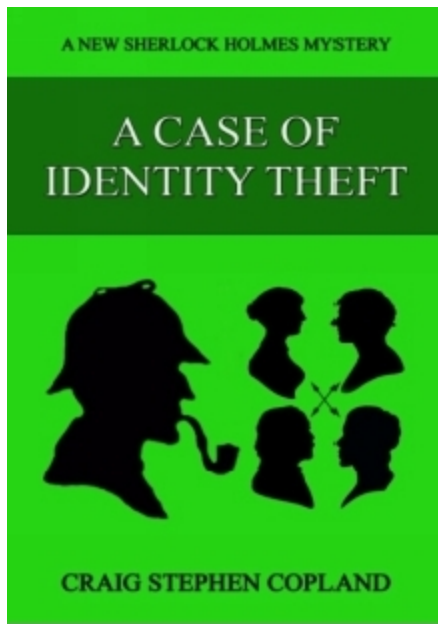
The Bald-Headed Trust.

No sooner has Sherlock Holmes arrived in Plymouth for a short vacation enforced by Dr. Watson than he finds himself in the middle of an unsolved crime – the Telegraph Murders. Two electrical engineers were found dead after completing a contract for the new Western Union telegraph office. Holmes's very unusual helper in this case is an exceptionally pious – but still attractive even if sturdily built – woman who, with her husband, is the proprietor of a Christian bookstore.

Some evil genius – and the true Sherlockian can easily guess who – is behind a scheme to rob shareholders of millions of pounds and is prepared to commit murder to make sure the diabolical plan works. Holmes, Watson and his new recruits must first deduce what is going on and then solve the crime.

Readers who are sympathetic to devout Christian believers will enjoy seeing some saintly folks help the world's greatest detective.

Lovers of Sherlock Holmes mysteries will enjoy this new story, written today but as faithful as possible to the characters, heroes, villains, language, and setting of the original Sherlock Holmes.



A Case of Identity

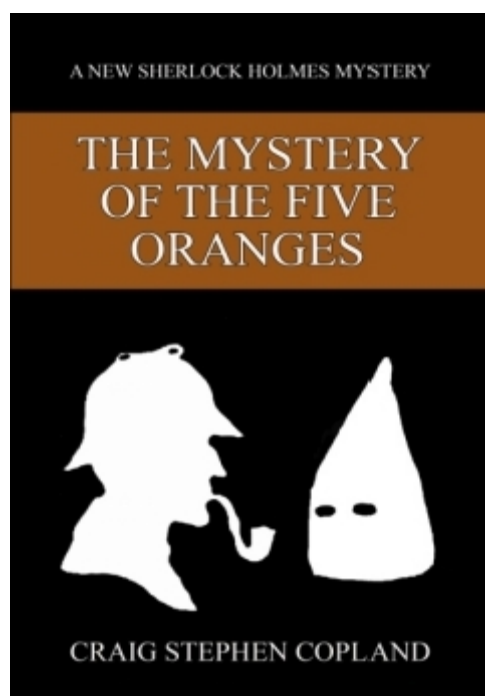
Theft. A not overly attractive young woman seeks the help of Sherlock Holmes. Her husband is missing. Only a few days later the missing husband arrives, breathless, at 221B Baker Street. His wife is missing. Someone has gone to a lot of trouble to get the two of them out of England and the country's greatest detective knows that some evil plot is afoot. He agrees to help them.

But then the mothers of both the young husband and the wife come asking for the services of Sherlock Holmes. Both of their children are now missing and foul play is suspected. A different young couple is found in an alley in the East End, minus their heads. The Press screams about the return of Jack the Ripper.

Together with Dr. Watson and with a little help from Mycroft Holmes, our brilliant sleuth must put an end to a string of murders, recover half a million pounds in stolen securities, and rescue the young couple from certain death at the hands of the evil powers.

Fans of Sherlock Holmes will enjoy this new mystery with all the familiar characters and settings, but with a new and intricate plot and a storyline that reaches from the East End

of London to Botany Bay and beyond. Buy it now and enjoy reading yet another Sherlock Holmes mystery.



The Mystery of the Five Oranges. On a miserable rainy evening, a desperate father enters 221B Baker Street. His daughter has been kidnapped and spirited off the North America. The evil network who have taken her has spies everywhere. If he goes to Scotland Yard, they will kill her. There is only one hope – Sherlock Holmes.

Holmes and Watson sail to a small corner of Canada, Prince Edward Island, in search of the girl. They find themselves fighting one of the most powerful and malicious organizations on earth – the Ku Klux Klan. But they are aided in their quest by the newest member of the Baker Street Irregulars, a determined and imaginative young redhead, and by the resources of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

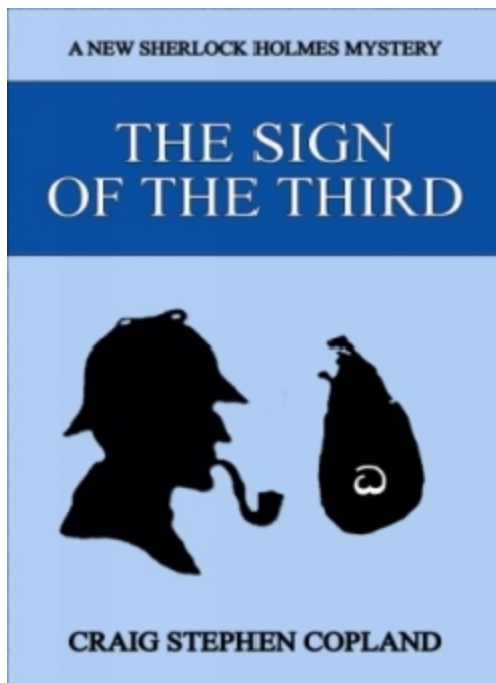
Sherlockians will enjoy this new adventure of the world's most famous detective, inspired by the original story of The Five Orange Pips. And those who love Anne of Green Gables will thrill to see her recruited by Holmes and Watson to help in the defeat of crime.



A Scandal in

Fordlandia. A satirical parody—this one inspired by *A Scandal in Bohemia* and set in Toronto in 2014.

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are visited by Toronto's famous mayor. He is desperate. When he was a teenager, someone took some nasty photos of him. Those photos are now in the hands of his hated enemies, the Media. If they are made public, disaster could come not only upon those in the photo but on all of civilization as we know it. Holmes and Watson must retrieve the photos and save His Honour before chaos descends yet again on this most colorful politician.



The Sign of the Third. A beautiful, fair-haired young woman with exotic eyes enters 221B Baker Street. Her father, his closest friend, and a young medical student have all died in the past two weeks. Each body was found soon after death but with rigor mortis already set in. She believes they were murdered and seeks the help of Sherlock Holmes.

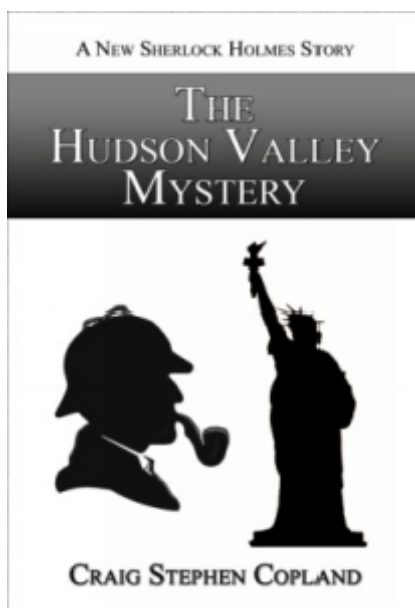
The mystery that led to their deaths began fifteen hundred years ago when the sacred tooth of the Buddha was brought to Ceylon. Since then it has never left the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy where it has been guarded and worshiped. Now it is coming to London, a triumph of the Empire. But what if it is stolen? It would be a disaster. And the murders are all tied to it.

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, aided by the young woman, Mary Morstan, the Baker Street Irregulars, and the mysterious dark-skinned irregular known as The Injin, must save the Tooth, and the Empire, and put the murdering scoundrels out of business.

Dr. Watson, ever the gentleman, cannot help but desire to help this lovely young woman who is in fear for her life. And

there is something else he cannot help either.

The story is inspired by the original Sherlock Holmes mystery, *The Sign of the Four*. The New Mystery borrows the same characters, the same exotic origins, and the same setting in Victorian London, but then take the reader on an imaginative journey spanning over a thousand miles and half the globe. Fans of Sherlock Holmes will enjoy seeing their beloved characters in an entirely new murder mystery.



The Hudson Valley

Mystery. Dr. Watson and his wife are enjoying a peaceful breakfast when a note arrives

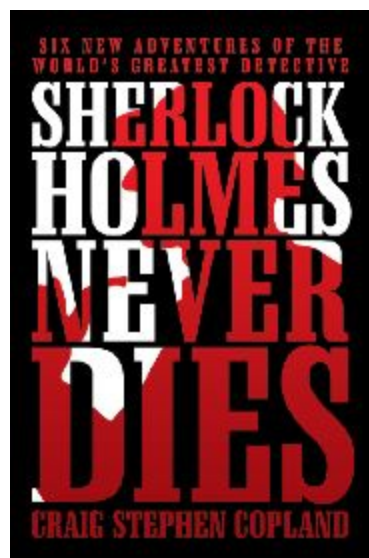
from Sherlock Holmes inviting them on a journey to New York City. A terrible tragedy has taken place in the Hudson Valley, just north of the great metropolis. A young man confessed to having murdered his father, and then he went stark raving mad.

The lad's mother knows that he could not have done the foul deed and that he certainly is not mad. Her only hope is Sherlock Holmes and she calls on him to help her and rescue her son.

Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson, and Watson's wife, Mary Morstan, make their way to America and enter along with thousands of immigrants seeking a new life in America. In New York City they meet the villains of Tammany Hall and, at the village where the crime took place they encounter ... maybe ...- no one will ever know for sure ... a ghostly apparition that haunts the pleasant glade known as Sleepy Hollow.

A friend of the alleged murderer is found dead. A young woman is violated. Holmes must avoid being led astray a second time and act quickly to trap the real murderer.

The story is inspired by The Boscombe Valley Mystery, one of the original stories in the canon of Sherlock Holmes stories. The beloved characters of those stories are all still there present. The events and the setting may be new, but Sherlockians everywhere will recognize the mind and actions of the world's most beloved detective. It will especially appeal to those readers who also love New York. Buy it now and enjoy the adventure.



Sherlock Holmes Never Dies. Return to Baker Street, where the world's most famous detective encounters six new cases that require his expert touch.

London's super-sleuth, Sherlock Holmes, sets out with long suffering Watson as the detectives of Scotland Yard are stumped yet again.

Blood coats the street of Victorian England, but no evidence is clear and no suspect cleared of guilt. As to be expected, evil genius—the Napoleon of Crime—Professor Moriarty soon reappears. The great detective must thwart his diabolical machinations, but even Holmes is practically brought to his knees by shocking new discoveries only he can understand.

Despite Moriarty's conniving, Sherlock will use the science of deduction to unravel mysteries of theft, abduction, political intrigue, and murder. Female characters take much deserved center stage in these updated stories, no longer willing to play the part of hapless victim or jealous wife. Meanwhile, Holmes and Watson traipse the globe in search of justice. No guilty party is safe, no matter the distance, from the all-knowing eye of the world's best detective and his devoted friend.

Copyright

Copyright © 2015 by Craig Stephen Copland

All rights reserved. No part of this book that has been written by Craig Stephen Copland may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by an information storage and retrieval system, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review to be printed in a magazine, newspaper, or on the web, or by a book retailer as a sample, without permission in writing from Craig Stephen Copland.

Reader: This ebook is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This ebook may not be re-sold or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each recipient. If you're reading this book and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased for your enjoyment only, then please return to your favorite retailer and purchase your own copy. Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.

The first fifty original Sherlock Holmes stories are no longer under copyright; nor are the characters of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson.

Published by:
Conservative Growth
1101 30th Street NW. Ste. 500
Washington, DC, 20007

Cover designs by Rita Toews.

